

## First Philippine Baptist Church: A Journey of 20 Years

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We have a God who never once failed us. He never will. He has loved and led and guarded us all those years.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the life of First Philippine Baptist Church, we see ourselves moving on –

occupying what the Lord in His infinite plan is providing for us. This may not be a high and lofty edifice to the world, but still a glorious sight to behold.

Each plan of the work of the church had to be a step of faith. Consider the “what-ifs”. What if we were fearful? In the 1970’s the Lord allowed the Filipino members of Rice Temple Baptist Church near the Medical Center to grow in number until we composed 1/3 of the congregation. Dr. Vicente Co of the Union Baptist Association kept reminding the group that there are numerous Filipinos to be reached. And what if this statement, meant to discourage, was heeded: “No church run by Filipinos ever succeeded”?

God did ‘run’ the early mission work. God did send godly people to shepherd the flock. In 1987, Dr. Tomas Calisterio became our first pastor. In his care, the Church Constitution was drafted and First Philippine Baptist Church was born.

Rev. Denmark Suison of Manila’s Faith Baptist Church succeeded him in 1989. In his ministry God gave the increase – our number grew. This paved the way for the acquisition of the 8809 Bissonnet property, with the help of Deerpark and Woodforest Baptist Churches, which co-signed our mortgage. Our members who were homeowners vouched for the sizeable equity. What if these ones were fearful and did not believe the church would come across?

First Philippine was found faithful and the mortgages were liquidated (paid in full) in the year 2002 – 12 years instead of 15. This was the Lord’s doing!

On December 14, 1994, Rev. Ernest Howard Dagohoy arrived in Houston to be our Youth and Associate Pastor. His wife, Cecile Gonzales-Dagohoy, came later. He left the University Church of Central Philippine as University Chaplain and Associate Pastor; and Cecile as resident physician at the Iloilo Mission Hospital. Pastor Ernest became Senior Pastor in 1997 after Pastor Denmark resigned. Pastor Ernest was used by God to bring the church to new heights. In 2004 the Doctorate of Ministry degree was conferred on him.



How wonderfully blest the church is with Cecile as a helpmate. An extraordinary multi-gifted person! And with Faith Alexine, born to them in August 1997, the blessings are doubled! This star student plays her violin (also plays piano and guitar) during our Wednesday Night Prayer Meetings, playing along her mom’s piano accompaniment. So beautiful! The Lord is using her to encourage everyone to be involved in the prayer life of the church. How can I forget that she is only 11 years old!

Let's consider how God is at work in the church. Brother O.J. Guerrero, a physical therapist, was a guest to a Christmas Cantata in 1991. There he found the Lord and soon became a Bible student. He served as a Co-Worker in 1998 and Associate Pastor thereafter. In 2003 he earned his Doctorate Degree in Theology. He married Carol Fortune, a member of the church, and they had two handsome boys added to their family. He is now pastoring a church in Colorado Springs.



Remember what a part-time Youth Minister appointment did to Pastor Rick Del Rosario in 2003? He taught Science at Cy-Creek High School. The Lord revealed to him he did not need a teacher's salary to sustain him. He was needed in the work full time. Pastor Rick became a Minister of the Gospel in 2004 and in 2008 finished his Master of Divinity Degree. Better still, he "earned" a godly wife in Emily Barger of Kansas. They are newly married. What a provision!

First Philippine's plan to relocate was conceived with concern for our coming generation. We make the path smooth for them to carry on the work of God when we are gone. The church truly impacts our children. We can't deny what beautiful kids we have. Just watch them perform at the children's choir. Also, take notice of our wonderful teen-agers and young people. They make us so proud of them.

The relocation of the church to its present address at 15002 Hillcroft Street, Missouri City, Texas 77489, was God's call! Gone are my 'what ifs' and 'whys'. This I know, if it is His will, He works all things out in His own perfect way and timing.

On our 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006, Dr. John Bisagno, retired pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, led a Capital Campaign – a time when God opened our eyes to the part we need to play, and be able to say "I helped build the church". It was a wonderful exercise of faith in God's provision. Many are the testimonies of miracles seen in the balancing of checkbooks. Even our children did their part. God really provides – only believe!

Now, since it was God's money that was fulfilling our pledges, must we let God stop the miracles just because the 3-year giving has elapsed? Think about it! The loan application to start building was approved in 2007.

Construction has gone full-speed ahead after September 3, 2008. Our old church was sold to the Tabernaculo De Vida. In transition, we worshipped at the beautiful and spacious facility of Willow Meadows Baptist Church, and our church office used a trailer at the construction site. Our transition time was about 8 months. We fast forward to May 31, 2009. The transition journey is ended. We have arrived and it's Open House. We welcome our friends and neighbors.



Our church building is beautiful. It is a peaceful sight. She stands on a "sure" foundation – will withstand any hurricane, according to Engineer Fred Golveo and Architect Stan Ontoy, who faithfully supervised the construction.

I have a mental picture of a flourishing tree planted by a river with roots sinking deep. In the same way may this structure be a venue where our roots would sink deep in the Lord, fed on His Word; where we commune in prayer; and in this sanctuary may we find strength and solace when the storms of life come.

For more information, visit the website of First Philippine Baptist Church at <http://www.fpbchouston.org>