

9-2010

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Recommended Citation

Meulemans, Paul, "A Giving Spirit" (2010). *Lake Union Herald*. 422.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/422>

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A Giving Spirit

BY PAUL MEULEMANS

I knew early on that God was calling me to mission service, but I always ignored His call—thinking others were more qualified. That is, until I was told a firsthand experience from a friend and student missionary who gave a year of his life on the remote Island of Jeh, in the Marshall Islands. He described Jeh as a beautiful but with none of the amenities most of us take for granted—no clean drinking water, no phone service, limited solar electricity and definitely no Internet service. As I listened to my friend, I realized Jeh was a place where I could be used by God. Six months later I found myself there.

After a relaxing Christmas vacation I returned to Jeh to meet back up with my fellow missionary, Chad Dungan. Having taught at the school for a semester, I thought I was ready for anything. Little did I know, we were about to be tested.

I was informed immediately upon arrival that there was no rice or flour left, and that the islanders limited to the small supplies of local food. Chad and I rationed what little we had, but knew it couldn't last two months until the ship would finally arrive.

We were hungry. Not just a little hungry, but starving—the kind of hunger we Americans don't get to experience. My students were so hungry they could barely hold their heads up much less study. I knew God takes care of people who work for Him, but I didn't feel very blessed right then. The only meal I would eat that day was a coconut, and I was just plain sick of eating coconut. It made me upset, discouraged and most of all homesick—until God sent a blessing.

Our neighbor, Rongatuk, arrived with a huge bowl of steaming soup made with her last can of vegetables. It was the last of the food she had to feed her entire family, but she was still willing to give it to Chad and me. I thank God for



examples of a humble, giving spirit; I pray that we all realize what Jesus really means when He says, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

At Andrews University, I will not allow myself to forget the hardships the people of the outer islands endure every day. I am working toward sending a few goats there, a renewable source of food that should help with the malnutrition issues that plague the area. I cannot allow myself to stop there, because the SDA church in Jeh has a leak-

ing roof, the SDA school is in disrepair, the pastor's house is a shack far too small for him and his family, and they are in desperate need of a high school program in the area. Since returning, I have raised a little more than \$1,000, but it will take a lot more money to make a significant difference.

If you would like to support the mission projects for the Island of Jeh, please contact the Andrews University Office of Campus Ministries. I continue to pray that God leads in my life and allows for a continued blessing in the Marshall Islands.

Paul Meulemans is from Reedsville, Wisconsin. He is pursuing a marketing degree at Andrews University.