

10-2009

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Recommended Citation

Slikkers, Erica, "A Living Example of Christ" (2009). *Lake Union Herald*. 500.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/500>

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A Living Example of Christ

BY ERICA SLIKKERS

On May 5, 44 Andrews University Symphony Orchestra students, faculty and staff departed for the Philippines and Hong Kong on a nearly three-week tour. Planned as simply an educational music tour culminating in the very first International Adventist Youth Music Festival, it didn't take long to find opportunities to work in the mission field.

Perhaps I was being ignorant, but as we prepared for travel to the Philippines the thought never entered my mind that it was a Third World country. I was shocked by the poverty. Shanty homes lined streets and many citizens don't have access to such simple luxuries as indoor plumbing or running water. Our busload of faces very different from their own was a magnet for attention. People waved as if we were celebrities in a tour bus.

Arriving at the Adventist University of the Philippines of Puting Kahoy, Silang Cavite, Philippines, we were exhausted from traveling, but perked up with our hosts' warm welcome. On our first Sabbath, students visited several community churches and participated in the worship services. Some groups, including mine, found ourselves coordinating the entire service. The church leaders mistakenly thought we would provide the worship program.

Reflecting on that first Sabbath, I later realized a significant life lesson. While leading song service, I noticed several children standing on their tiptoes in the back of the church. These children couldn't take their eyes or ears off us. They absorbed our every word and action. It hit me: *I now fully understood what it meant to be a living example for Christ.* I live every day intending to be polite and kind to every person I meet, but never before fully considered how I represent Christ in the way I talk or dress, my manner of prayer



While traveling in the Philippines and Hong Kong, Erica Slikkers (left) learned that "every action I made was a witness." Also pictured is Gladden O. Flores, president of Adventist University of the Philippines.

and in every move I make. We were out of our element, but in the center of attention. This instilled a deeper sense of responsibility to let Christ shine through me.

A new church plant, Pioneer Memorial Church in Hong Kong, was dedicated and our group was responsible for most of the service. The dynamic was different there. As a new church, many new members to the faith filled its pews. If I had thought the im-

portance of being a living example of Christ was significant before, this opportunity took it to a new level. This group observed us not just as foreigners, but as new Christian brothers and sisters in the Seventh-day Adventist faith. This was more mission. Every action I made was a witness.

During the course of the trip, the temperature was nearly unbearable—even to a heat-lover like myself. The humidity was unheard of, the bugs were big, the rehearsals were long and patience was a hot commodity. Though faced with daily challenges, the trip was undoubtedly an experience of a lifetime. It was also my first opportunity to lead the rest of my life as a living, breathing example of Christ-like character.

Erica Slikkers, a violinist in the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra, is the assistant manager at the Howard Performing Arts Center at Andrews University.