

CONVERGENCE: BEGINNINGS IN THE CEBUANO  
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

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There is a tide in the affairs of men.  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.

(William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3)

Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.  
Zechariah 4:6

When Jordan Abellano was a student at Far East Advanced School of Theology in the 1980's, he asked Trinidad Seleký about the history of the Assemblies of God in the Visayas, she replied, "You guys need to submit your own part of history then give it to me."<sup>1</sup>

Neither Jordan Abellano nor his teacher ever got around to update her history of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. Jordan wrote, "What was needed was for someone to gather the bits and pieces of our history from knowledgeable sources as part of the bigger picture." I hope that with this attempt the process of gathering the bits and pieces of Cebuano Pentecostalism will begin, for the initial stages of the Assemblies of God in the Cebuano speaking region of the Philippines is worth telling. It is a story that defies the usual pattern of missionary activity and highlights the kind of convergence of unplanned events associated with Pentecostalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Jordan Abellano, Facebook message to author, July 2, 2011.

Nearly all accounts of Assemblies of God beginnings in Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao include the following points.

1. In 1951, Assembly of God missionary Edwin Brengle founded Immanuel Bible Institute (IBI) in Sogod, Leyte, which later became a Bible College.
2. Graduates of this school pioneered the first churches of the Assemblies of God in Leyte and from there to Northern Mindanao.

There are huge gaps in these accounts, however. It is in trying to fill these gaps and answering the puzzles that arise that the significance of the Cebuano Assemblies of God beginnings comes to the fore:

1. Why would an Assemblies of God missionary choose a remote town in the Eastern Visayas as a base for missionary activity? Until now, Sogod does not have the port facilities of the three main cities of Leyte: Ormoc, Maasin and Tacloban. At 39,800 Sogod only has half the population of Maasin, a fifth that of Ormoc and a sixth of Tacloban, the regional center of the Eastern Visayas. Assemblies of God missionaries as a rule base themselves in urban centers. Benjamin Caudle, the first Assembly of God missionary who arrived in 1926 based himself in Manila, as did Leland Johnson who came in 1939. Even the Brengles themselves initially started in Manila. The exception to the rule would be Warren and Marjorie Denton. They made rural San Jose, Antique as their base but only because the congregations started by Crispulo Garsulao needed oversight. (Garsulao, a young Filipino, was converted in the US and returned at the end of the 1920's to his village in Villar, Sibalom, Antique. He established several congregations in the mountainous regions of Antique but his career was cut short by his premature death. Trinidad Seleký is the main written source of this account but in 1969 I briefly pastored the first church established by Garsulao when two of his sisters were still alive. In 1965 I also visited one of the churches he planted, a thriving Pentecostal church in Villa Solomon, an interior village in Patnongon, Antique. )
2. How did Brengle recruit the first batch of students to study at IBI? Normally discipleship and then ministerial training follow the establishment of a local church. But nowhere in the accounts of IBI is mention made of any church. In fact the only church mentioned is one in Sogod with Placido Ortega as

pastor.<sup>2</sup> How were these ministerial candidates recruited? What was their experience of church life? How did they come to decide to dedicate their life to the Pentecostal ministry?

3. Finally, how did the first batch of eight graduates do their work such that in less than five years after graduation, their converts were themselves attending IBI—not only from Leyte but from all over the Cebuano speaking areas of the Visayas and Mindanao? I studied at IBI in 1957, just five years after the first graduates of the school stepped out into the field. The student population was over fifty—(my class alone had 30). There were students from the churches of Antique, planted as early as the 1930's. There were new converts from Iloilo City and Bacolod City who were sent by missionary pastors, Gunder and Doris Olsen and Calvin and Olive Zeissler. But more remarkable was the number of students coming from Northern Mindanao. There were students from Surigao, Agusan, Misamis Oriental, Lanao and Misamis Occidental and Zamboanga del Sur or virtually the entire coastal provinces of Northern Mindanao! None of these churches were planted by Western missionaries. How did these churches come into being?

In answer to these questions I wrote friends and acquaintances who still remembered the people who were part of the story. Help also came from another direction. Retired missionary Calvin Zeissler sent me two compact discs of photos of his ministry in the Philippines which began when he visited Cebu and IBI in 1953 before leaving for Bacolod where he would establish Calvary Temple. This was the year when IBI moved from Sogod and acquired a two-hectare campus in Banawa. I posted some of Zeissler's photos in the Immanuel Bible Institute Alumni Association Facebook and soon old photographs were dug up and posted and happily for me including photos from Sogod. It became a lot easier for me to get the information I needed.

Of course many important first hand sources of information are no longer alive. Both Ortega and Brengle are now deceased. Of the original batch of graduates only Roque Cagas and Emperatriz Reyes Maureal are still living. Thankfully, Roque Cagas Jr., second son of Roque Cagas, is an avid online user and helped me identify individuals

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<sup>2</sup> Diomedes Lusica, Facebook message to IBC Alumni Association, July 11, 2011.

in the photographs. Rosanny Engcoy still has excerpts of an interview she did with Reverend Cagas. Having also served as District Superintendent of the area in question, he is a treasure trove of information that others could mine for a fuller historical account. I quote excerpts of that interview. But this story relies more upon how, sixty years later, the beginnings of Cebuano Pentecostalism was remembered not by the participants themselves but by those whose lives were affected by the Pentecostal movement's incursion into the Cebuano speaking region of the country.

The information provided by Seleky on the early history of Cebuano Assemblies of God churches is bare and contains little to describe what really happened in the Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

Chaplain Edwin M. Brengle joined MacArthur's liberation forces. As he stepped on Philippine soil in Leyte, March 10, 1945, he felt a desire to help the Filipino people, and with the war over, he received a missionary appointment. He and his family arrived in Manila on January 6, 1947. After three years of service in Bethel Bible Institute in Pozorrubio, Pangasinan and later in Malinta, Polo (now Valenzuela), Bulacan, the Brengles moved to Sogod, Leyte and founded Immanuel Bible Institute in July, 1951.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting that while Seleky devoted seventeen paragraphs of Assemblies of God history to the work in the Western Visayas, she devoted only three short paragraphs to Assemblies of God beginnings in Eastern and Central Visayas and Northern Mindanao. The reason is simple. Missionaries write reports of their work; national workers do not. And the Brengles just did not provide her with the reports she needed.

Calvin Zeissler writes:

I arrived in the Philippines when Bro. Brengle had just moved the school from Sogod to Cebu City. As far as I know from him, the school was started in Sogod and they had built or rented a facility that served as the school building, but it was destroyed by the typhoon that passed through that area. That is why he decided to move the school to Cebu.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Trinidad E. Seleky, "The Organization of the Philippine Assemblies of God and the Role of the Early Missionaries," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8 #2 (2005): 271-287.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin Zeissler, Facebook message to author, July 11, 2011.

Zeissler mentions that the Brengles had a part in starting the Revival Center in Tondo, Manila, but the missionary couple did not stay long in the metropolis. After turning over the Revival Center to Paul Pipkin they moved to Leyte. China was in turmoil and missionaries like Paul Pipkin moved out as Mao Tze Tung took over. Many of them transferred to the Philippines. Was it possible that like Daniel Boone, Edwin Brengle wanted more elbow room because Luzon was getting too crowded with new missionaries? But in 1950 the Assemblies of God churches south of Manila were located mainly in the Western Visayas and with the exception of the Dentons in Antique there were no missionaries around. The Olsens and the Zeisslers would not arrive until 1953. The Blounts would arrive only in 1955. The major cities of the Visayas—Cebu, Iloilo and Bacolod—were open to Brengle. If he was more adventurous he could have gone to Mindanao especially since Southern Mindanao already had Assemblies of God churches started by Ilocanos and Ilonggos. Instead he chose to go to Leyte. Why?

An account by Diomedes Lusica, a 1961 graduate, may provide a hint:

I remember Rev. Ortega's frequent testimony about him becoming a Pentecostal believer. When World War II broke out, his loving wife passed away while [he was] pastoring a Protestant church in Sogod, Leyte. He felt lonely, forsaken and alone. Then came the American forces camping across his church. He said, "I was surprised that every Sunday evening I hear a big noise of excitement. So one evening after our vesper service I ventured to creep inside the tent to see what was going on. And lo and behold, I saw a bunch of young servicemen having a good time singing and praising the Lord. Each one grabbed the mike and testifies what the Lord has done in their lives." To him it was new and exciting. So every Sunday evening he goes and enjoys the service. He forgot about his sorrow and loneliness. Then one night, he found himself sitting on the front seat. Then while prayers were made, somebody grabbed and prayed for him to receive the in filling of the Holy Spirit which happened that night. I believe that was the beginning of the work in Sogod, Leyte.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Diomedes Lusica, Facebook message to author, July 11, 2011.

A Protestant pastor attending a Pentecostal service would certainly have grabbed the attention of whomever it was who was leading the service. Is it possible that the leader was Chaplain Edwin Brengle? Again the possibility is not remote that the two were in correspondence. According to Selekty the Brengles taught at BBI (Bethel Bible Institute) in Pangasinan and moved with the school to its present location in Malinta. In 1949 Placido Ortega himself was also teaching in a Protestant school, Vision Hill Bible Institute in Cambite, a barrio of Malitbog, Leyte but now belonging to Tomas Oppus. It is tempting to propose that a motive for the Brengles move to Leyte was to do their work freely without too much interference from other missionaries—but perhaps there was more. In Leyte they had acquaintances developed during the time of his chaplaincy. Furthermore and maybe just as important—Leyte provided vivid memories of wartime exploits. The Battle of Leyte from October to December 1944 culminating with MacArthur's landing at Palo, Leyte, is considered as one of the greatest battles of world history. It was in Leyte that MacArthur made this radio broadcast, "People of the Philippines I have returned." Although geographically Leyte was remote, in the hearts of those who participated in the struggle to liberate the Philippines, it was near.

Upon returning to Leyte the Brengles lost no time. Roque Cagas Jr. mentions that Brengle was invited to hold a revival meeting at National Heroes Institute (NHI), a Protestant school located in Cambite just a few kilometers south of Sogod but belonging to another municipality. He adds that Brengle was invited by no other than Placido Ortega himself.<sup>6</sup> But his father disputes this.<sup>7</sup> He says that it was the director of the school himself, Rev. Jose Evarreta, who invited Brengle. It is common practice among Protestant schools to hold a week-long evangelistic or Christian life emphasis. As a new missionary in a small town, it was only natural that Brengle would be invited to preach at NHI.

Rev. Cagas describes what happened:

It was in 1950 when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> year high school that an Assembly of God missionary, Rev. Edwin Brengle, preached in our school and it was there that I was convicted and respond to the challenge of salvation. I consider that the first step of my conversion. Beginning that time, I was inspired to take up

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<sup>6</sup> Roque Cagas Jr, Facebook message to author, July 5, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Roque Cagas interviewed by Rosanny Encoy, September 13, 2005.

the ministry. I was inspired by the lives of the ministers in the high school institution as well as in the Bible school. I thought that the best life that can be spent by any man on earth is to serve the Lord. So I prayed for an opening to be in the Bible school. Thank God, when I graduated from high school, Rev. Edwin Brengle had me as one of the scholars to study in Bethel Bible Institute in Manila. And with my co-graduates - we were seven in the school - and together with other young people from different places of Leyte, we went to Manila and we were about 20 young people. So we spent our first year in Manila.<sup>8</sup>

Roque Cagas would study only for one year at BBI. When schools reopened in July 1951 the Leyte students were about to return to Manila but Rev. Brengle and Rev. Placido Ortega suggested that we start Immanuel Bible Institute. So when that school opened, we attended. We were already enrolled as 2<sup>nd</sup> year, and we recruited four 1<sup>st</sup> year students. And when the school opened, there were 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year classes.<sup>9</sup> Thus Immanuel Bible Institute was born—not in an urban center but in a third class municipality of the Eastern Visayas.

How much time did Brengle and Ortega have to prepare this original group of ministry candidates? It depends upon the date of Brengle's arrival in Leyte. If he and Oneida arrived in 1950, they must have done the revival in NHI no earlier than January but no later than March for the batch of Roque Cagas was graduating and in a few weeks leave for Manila. There seems to be very little time there--unless groundwork was being made for him by Ortega. But he could not have arrived earlier than 1949 for Seleky's account says they stayed three years at BBI. So either they arrived late in 1949 or early in January 1950. If the latter then Ortega must have done a lot of the preparation for Brengle to get accepted at NHI. If so, this is a most remarkable cooperation between an American missionary and a Filipino national. But Brengle and Ortega did not have the luxury of time--they only had at most six months to evangelize, disciple, and encourage these young people to consider the ministry as their life calling. So hardly had these young people been converted and graduated from high school, than they were made to prepare to go to Manila to study in a Bible school.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Even if the formation period was stretched to a year it still was a remarkable feat. By comparison, my home church in the city of Iloilo, took six years to send its 20<sup>th</sup> ministry candidate to train in Bible school.

But there is more to it than time. The experience of church life is important for anyone whose work involves working as a church man or woman. How and where did these young people experience church life?

Again the explanation may lie in the work of Placido Ortega. Not only was he teaching at National Heroes Institute, he was also connected with a Bible Institute right next to National Heroes Institute. The name of the school was Vision Hill Bible Institute (VHBI). A picture of the students and faculty of VHBI taken in September 1949 shows Rev. Ortega sitting at the front. Beside him are Protestant ministers and dignitaries. At the back are cut out letters forming Romans 1:16. Among the students are future pastors and pastors wives of the Assemblies of God: Lily Maureal and his future wife Emperatriz Reyes, Estrella Tagalo, future wife of Roque Cagas and Gertrudes Ugsad, later to become the mother of Jordan Abellano.<sup>10</sup>

Of Ortega being a minister of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Jaime Balista says that he is “very sure” and that “he was in fact the moderator ... [of] their conference starting from Maasin to Silago” and that Ortega was a “pillar of [the]UCCP conference” in Leyte.<sup>11</sup>

If Vision Hill had become Pentecostalized, had regular chapel services and prayer meetings and a highly committed student population, then it is very likely that it provided the formation and motivation needed by the recruits. According to Rosanny Engcoy, Roque Cagas was a “devout Catholic” but he is the exception to the rule. Most of the other recruits belonged to the UCCP and some, like Lily Maureal and Emperatriz Reyes, had attended Vision Hill Bible Institute. In other words, the first ministerial candidates identified by Brengle and Ortega were not raw recruits who jumped at the opportunity to go to Manila for free education and free room and board to boot!

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<sup>10</sup> Roque Cagas Jr., photo submitted to Immanuel Bible College on Facebook, July 14, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Jaime Balista, Facebook message to author, July 11, 2011.

It was in Leyte that the first pastors of the Assemblies of God were recruited—Roque and Estrella Cagas, Lily and Emperatriz Maureal, Perfo and Brigida Navarrete, Felix and Pelagia Engcoy, David Artuza, Wire Aley Gonzalez, Rudy Trigo, William Navarrete, Eley Sumbeling and many more. In Leyte, Brengle rode at its flood a massive wave of spiritual energy.

Not all students of National Heroes Institute and Vision Hill Bible Institute would enter the ministry as full-time pastors. Gertrudes Ugsad, mother of Jordan Abellano, chose to stay in the life of the laity but was vital in supporting pioneers of Assemblies of God churches in the Northeastern section of Mindanao. In a message to the Alumni Association Facebook, Jordan admits: “Soon after their graduation, they all [who did not enter the ministry] lived their own lives looking for jobs, got married and have children but with the Pentecostal experience with them. That small diaspora helped plant churches anywhere they went.”<sup>12</sup>

In choosing to join the Assemblies of God, Jordan’s mother gave up a scholarship at the premier legacy of Presbyterianism in the Philippines—the prestigious Silliman University in Dumaguete. Gertrudes got married to Jordan’s father, Estanislao Abellano, originally from Gibusong, a small island at the tip of Dinagat, in Surigao del Norte. Lured by the prospect of work in the logging industry, the family moved to Agusan, at first joining a Presbyterian church but when a Pentecostal pastor arrived, they became the core members of the church. And when Modesto Dalapu after graduating from IBI in 1960 went to establish a church in the city itself, they helped him too. Three of the Abellano children entered the ministry—Jordan, Oral and Noel. Jordan is now based in Hong Kong where he pastors a church for expatriate Filipinos and earned a doctorate degree. Oral now ministers in California. Noel remains in Agusan.

Presbyterian Protestantism was introduced to the Philippines in 1901, shortly after Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. Together with the Methodists, Northern Baptists, Congregationalists and Disciples of Christ, they made an agreement of comity so there would be no overlapping in mission work, but leaving the capital, Manila open for everyone. The Episcopal Church, refusing to convert Roman Catholics, chose to work among non-Christian tribal population. The Christian and Missionary Alliance, although not participant to the Comity, limited their mission to Mindanao. The

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<sup>12</sup> Jordan Abellano, Facebook message to author, July 13, 2011.

Presbyterians devoted themselves to the Cebuano speaking provinces of the Visayas. In 1929 the Presbyterians merged with the Congregational and United Brethren to form the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines. Then in 1948 UEC merged with the Philippine Methodist Church and the Evangelical Church in the Philippines, forming the United Church of Christ in the Philippines or UCCP

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the largest and most widespread Protestant church in the country, came into being in 1948. It unites in one church the United Evangelical Church in the Philippines (a 1929 union of Presbyterian, Congregational and United Brethren churches with the small United Church of Manila), the Philippine Methodist Church and the Evangelical Church in the Philippines (a 1944 union of various Evangelical churches).<sup>13</sup>

Mergers are a risky business, however, and not a few leaders and members of churches involved must have felt disenfranchised and alienated. They saw the ecumenism not as a movement to unify the church but as compromise, an adulteration of the faith once delivered to the saints. To these people the UCCP was “worldly.”

In the aspect of external holiness, Cebuano Pentecostals were not much different from newer conservative groups that arrived from America in the decade of the 50’s. But there was one aspect of Pentecostalism that would set it apart from evangelicalism—speaking in tongues. Glossolalia was heavenly language. No human experience is as transcendent, as holy as speaking with the tongues of angels.

As the decade of the fifties opened, Pentecostalism was no longer unknown among Protestant Christians in Northern Mindanao. The home of Felix and Lorenza Jalapit was a gathering place for those who were interested in the experience of the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Carlito Jalapit remembers that his parents belonged to the UCCP but encountered Pentecostals when they ventured to Cotabato in the 1940’s.<sup>14</sup> When they returned to their home town of Jimenez, in Misamis Occidental, a Pentecostal evangelist by the name of Solomon Patayan, followed them up and held meetings. Relatives of the Jalapits, mostly coming from the UCCP church, joined up with them and formed a house church. A companion of Evangelist Patayan, Modesto

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<sup>13</sup> Floyd T. Cunningham, “Diversities Within Philippine Post-war Protestantism” *The Mediator* 5 #1 (Oct 2003): 46.

<sup>14</sup> Carlito Jalapit, Facebook message to author, July 5, 2011.

Buta, influenced by Brengle and Ortega, suggested Roque Cagas, a new graduate of Immanuel Bible Institute in Sogod to be their pastor.<sup>15</sup>

With the arrival of Cagas, the renewal movement spread quickly. Very soon the Jimenez Assembly of God was having outreaches in Oroquieta to the north; later to be led by Lily and Emperatriz Maureal; and to the south all the way to Ozamis and then crossing the Panguil Bay to Tubod, in Lanao (to be pastored first by Eley Sumbeling and later by Rudy Trigo who began ministerial studies at IBI when it was still in Sogod).<sup>16</sup> From 1951 to 1953, virtually all the students of IBI were from Leyte. By 1954 Assemblies of God congregations in Northern Mindanao began sending ministerial candidates to Immanuel Bible Institute, which by now had moved to Cebu City. The first to graduate from Northern Mindanao was Max Abugan, from Caniogan, Tubod, Lanao. He belonged to the Class of 1957 which meant that he enrolled as a Freshman student in 1954 just a year after the birth of Jimenez Assembly of God. When I enrolled at IBI in August 1957, the older Assemblies of God churches of Antique and Cotabato were represented significantly. But there was an increasing number from Northern Mindanao. In 1958 there were students from Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Lanao, as well as the Central Visayan provinces of Cebu and Bohol. With few exceptions these young people came out of UCCP background.

Still it is worth noting that the first graduate of IBI to shepherd the renewal movement was not a former Protestant. Renewals need leadership and take root in particular places whether they happen in Wales or Asuza or Pensacola. So the flash point of Pentecostalism in Northern Mindanao was Jimenez and its leader was Roque Cagas, the former devout Catholic. But even more significant, it would put an individual without the baggage of Protestant governing systems and forge one that was distinctively Assemblies of God.

### Conclusion

Tantalizing question: what would have happened if Brengle chose to base himself in Cebu the cultural and economic hub of the Cebuano speaking provinces?

The answer to this question may lie partly in the history of two evangelical denominations that also started their work after the war but

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

based themselves in Cebu. The Baptist General Conference (BGC) and the Evangelical Free Church (EFC), like the early Protestants divided Cebu province, BGC to the north and EFC to the south with Cebu City open to both groups. Both groups remained in the province, unable to expand to other provinces until well into the 80's.

On the other hand the Assemblies of God, starting from the Eastern Visayas and moving rapidly to the more open populations of Northern Mindanao, gradually encircled Cebu City. The flow of Christian workers and pastors within the Cebuano speaking region was not from Cebu City outward but from the surrounding Cebuano speaking provinces going inward towards the economic and cultural hub. Both the city and the province grew at a much slower pace compared with the churches of Leyte and Northern Mindanao. The pastors of Cebu churches came from Northern Mindanao. Bethel Temple, the original city church of the Assemblies of God in Cebu did not produce home-grown pastors. Its first national pastors came from Leyte: Eusebio Tan, David Artuza and Roque Cagas. They were followed by pastors from Northern Mindanao: Cresencio Tandog, Diomedes Lusica, Michael Pilapil, Stanley Pilapil and Oriel Dumanon. The present pastor is from Southern Mindanao but his wife, the former Isidra Taboclaon, is from Canitoan in Northern Mindanao.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the 70's and 80's brought new seekers to Pentecostal churches and new churches were born with rapidity. Unlike other cities in Manila and the Western Visayas, and in contrast with new Charismatic groups, the Cebuano churches of the Assemblies of God were not personality driven. They were not as attracted to programs of evangelism and church planting methods as their counterparts in the Western Visayas for example. By and large the growth of Cebuano churches remained spontaneous rather than methodical in the tradition of Brengle, Ortega and Cagas.

And yet in comparison the Cebuano churches of the Assemblies of God outpaced other regions in terms of church growth.

Let's begin at the district level. Thirteen provinces comprised the original Cebuano speaking Visnomin District within the Central and Eastern Visayas and the whole of Northern Mindanao from Surigao in the east to Zamboanga in the west. Visnomin has multiplied into eight Districts. Sogod continues to be part of the Cebu-based district which is now called Cebu and Lower Leyte District and it remains to be one of the most rapidly growing districts of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. By comparison the former Southern Luzon District Council which covered a similar number of provinces only

multiplied into four: Southern Tagalog, Bicol, and Central Luzon District Councils.

But the real indicator of growth lies at the provincial level. The data is from the Philippines General Council Website.<sup>17</sup>

PROVINCE	POPULATION	DISTRICT	NO. CHURCHES	CHURCH TO POPULATION RATIO
CEBU	2,439,005	Central Visayas Lower Leyte (CVLL)	146	16,706
BOHOL	1,275,214	CVLL	74	17,233
NEGROS ORIENTAL	1,231,904	CVLL	63	19,554
ILOILO	1,691,878	WEST VISAYAS	61	27,736
AKLAN	495,122	NW VISAYAS	22	22,506
CAPIZ	701,664	NW VISAYAS	22	70,166

Although the population of the province of Cebu is greater, its 146 churches reduced the church to population ratio by one to sixteen thousand seven hundred, the lowest among the provinces listed. Furthermore, the Assemblies of God in the three provinces of the Central Visayas Lower Leyte District all posted smaller church to population ratio than their counterparts in the Western Visayas. There could be other factors in the reduction of churches in the Western Visayas such as churches joining other groups. Even then, however, the higher number of churches in CVLL could also mean that they Cebuanos are more successful in keeping their churches within the fold.

Another way of looking at the growth of Cebuano churches is by comparing them with Tagalog churches. The area of jurisdiction of the Southern Tagalog District Council includes at least nine provinces and eleven cities.

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<sup>17</sup> Info from website. <http://pgcag.wordpress.com/>

TOTAL CHURCHES SOUTHERN TAGALOG DISTRICT COUNCIL	203
TOTAL CHURCHES CEBU, BOHOL AND NEGROS ORIENTAL	283

The three provinces of Central Visayas exceeded the total number of Assemblies of God churches in the most heavily populated region of the country. I excluded Lower Leyte because it includes part of Leyte (Northern Leyte). If the churches of Southern Leyte were added, the gap between the two districts will widen even more.

Edwin Brengle is all but forgotten at Immanuel Bible College. According to Dave Johnson the Brengles returned to the United States in 1956 physically and emotionally exhausted. He and Oneida never returned.<sup>18</sup> Placido Ortega did not follow Brengle and IBI to Cebu. He remained in Leyte. But the Pentecostal flame they started in Leyte continues to burn.

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<sup>18</sup> Dave Johnson, *Led by the Spirit: the History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines* (Pasig City, Philippines: ICI Ministries, 2009), 102.