



# THE MERCY JOURNAL

A CHRONICLE OF HOPE AND HEALING

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# Our Vision and Mission

## VISION STATEMENT

A world where compassion reaches every child with cancer, every lonely elderly person, and every vulnerable individual in need.



## MISSION STATEMENT

At Adonai’s Mercy House, we are dedicated to caring for the most vulnerable, especially children with cancer in the Philippines and elderly individuals in the United States. We offer compassionate support through medical, emotional, and spiritual care to help ease their suffering and improve their quality of life. Our

mission is to ensure that no one is denied the care they need, regardless of financial challenges. With a heart full of compassion, we are committed to raising the necessary funds and providing personalized care, one patient at a time, so that every person we serve feels supported, valued, and treated with dignity.

## Our CORE VALUES

- Compassion**  
Caring deeply for the well-being of every individual we serve, with empathy and kindness at the heart of our actions.
- Dignity**  
Treating every patient, elderly person, and their families with respect, ensuring they feel valued and honored throughout their care journey.
- Commitment**  
A steadfast dedication to providing continuous support, raising necessary resources, and helping one patient at a time.
- Hope**  
Offering encouragement and faith in the face of adversity, providing not only physical care but emotional and spiritual support to uplift those in need.
- Integrity**  
Acting with honesty, transparency, and accountability in all our efforts to ensure the trust of the individuals and communities we serve.
- Collaboration**  
Working together with healthcare providers, communities, and supporters to extend the reach of our mission and vision.
- Inclusivity**  
Ensuring that no one is denied care or support based on financial or social barriers, embracing the most vulnerable without discrimination.
- Empowerment**  
Equipping families and individuals with the knowledge, resources, and support they need to manage their health and well-being.

## Help Us Continue to Give Hope

In the heart of Tondo, Manila, there is a quiet sanctuary called the Pediatric Oncology Ward at Mary Johnston Hospital. There, small, brave warriors are fighting battles that no child should ever have to face—cancer.



At Adonai’s Mercy House, we believe that poverty should never be a death sentence. Currently, we walk alongside 24 precious children. We provide them a comfortable room and the dignity of specialized care that eases their pain.

Your gift today is more than a donation; it is a beacon of hope for the needy young warriors. Will you help us keep the light on for our young cancer warrior?

To donate, scan this QR code:



We want to help more children. But as the needs grow, we need to seek new partners and donors to help us with the upkeep and expansion of our unit.

100% of your donation to the children of Adonai’s Mercy House goes directly to the care and facilities for our Filipino cancer warriors.

A NOTE FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

# Finding the Light in the Silence

In the current world of deafening noise and frantic speed, we invite you to step into a different rhythm.

This inaugural issue of “The Mercy Journal” is a new publication from Adonai’s Mercy House, yes, but also a sanctuary. Our mission is as profound as it is urgent: to provide a space for reflection and to champion the transformative power of mercy.

This journal is designed to exist beyond the reach of the 24-hour news cycle and the shallow “quick scroll” of social media. It is an invitation to pause, to breathe, and to explore the intersection of Christian values and modern life.

From our polished layouts to every carefully crafted sentence, we

have built this issue to reach out to you—the reader—with intentionality.

Within these pages, you will discover stories and essays that move past the abstract. We dive deep into the mechanics of grace, the grit of community, and the true cost of compassion. These narratives are designed to provide a visceral understanding of what it means to serve and to lead with a heart of outreach.

“The Mercy Journal” is no ordinary magazine. It is a bridge. Adonai’s

Mercy House (AMH) exists to support children in the fiercest of battles: the fight against cancer. When you hold this journal, you are holding their stories. You are engaging in an act of solidarity with young warriors and their families.

Inside, you will find our Executive Director’s report—a candid look at the year that was. You will also find a tapestry of healing, the weight of loss, the spark of hope, and the slow, beautiful work of restoration.

As you read, we hope you feel more than just warmth. We hope you feel the light within you catching fire—the light that sustains the lives of the children we serve.

Welcome to the journey. ■

Jasna Claudine C. Nicolas



# Message from THE FOUNDERS

When we started Adonai’s Mercy House 12 years ago, we had no idea how to begin—much less how to run—a nonprofit organization. All we had was a sincere desire to help poor Filipino children battling cancer and the families who love them.

We had no big office, no large programs, and no clear sense of where the journey would lead us. What we did have was an unshakable belief that God would guide every step we would take.

A decade passed. Things were moving, but progress often felt slow. Some even questioned whether Adonai’s Mercy House was making any impact at all. Still, our prayers never ceased.

In hindsight, it has become clear to me that God directed the growth of AMH in much the same way a bamboo plant grows. Bamboo spends years growing its roots deep underground before it ever breaks through the soil.

We believe this is what happened to Adonai’s Mercy House. In the beginning, our roots were growing—quietly and steadily. For more than 10 years, we learned how to serve better, how to remain faithful with small resources, and

how to care deeply for children and their families. Along the way, we learned patience. We also learned that even in times of uncertainty, God never left us.

Then, a little over two years ago, the bamboo began to rise. In its second year, 2025, Adonai’s Mercy House truly began to grow in remarkable ways. We strengthened our systems. We operationalized a pediatric oncology ward in an established hospital in Manila. We opened an office in Quezon City. We improved our programs and formed partnerships with institutions and organizations.

It felt like watching the bamboo finally shoot upward.

All of this growth is grace from God. Also, it is the fruit of faithful leadership of our Executive Director, Nancy Nicolas, and the dedication and hard work of her staff.



SHANE AND AIMEE WALLEDA

Although this year was marked by growth, it was also marred by grief. We lost some of the children we dearly loved. These were heartbreaking moments that tested us deeply. Yet even in grief, we must continue because many others need our support.

We share this story to remind us that good things take time. Like the bamboo, Adonai’s Mercy House is growing taller so it can continue to offer shelter, care, and hope to at-risk children and their families.

For everything, we give thanks to God. All glory belongs to Him. ■

# A Message from the Executive Director

It is my honor and privilege to present this report on the work of Adonai's Mercy House in 2025. This Annual Report speaks clearly about last year's milestones, outcomes, and numbers. It documents the programs we implemented, the children we served, the partnerships we forged, and the resources we stewarded. These details tell an important story of growth, accountability, and impact.

Yet it does not fully speak about what it feels like to stand in the middle of the battle (since we often refer to our beneficiaries as "young cancer warriors"). Being on the frontlines is a profoundly different experience. It feels like living on a steep emotional incline.

I experience deep fulfillment in moments of joy: when children smile, when programs expand, when partnerships take root, and when I see children and their caregivers settle, even briefly, into a sense of comfort at the pediatric oncology ward of Mary Johnston Hospital.

These "moments of joy" come during partner-sponsored parties, while children savor their favorite foods, as they open gifts with unguarded delight, or when they simply get to be children again. Happiness is whenever children forget the weight of their illness, even momentarily.

But joy walks hand in hand with grief. I feel devastated each time a child passes away. No number of years in this work has prepared

me for the emotional impact of witnessing a young life cut short.

Working for Adonai's Mercy House demands both emotional and spiritual resilience. This ministry requires one to endure a constant roller coaster of emotions. The challenge is how to remain focused on hope, to choose compassion daily, and to stay the course in spite of the pain.

I thank God for His sustaining grace. Time and again, He opens my eyes to recognize quiet miracles: the courage of parents who refuse to give up, the quiet strength of children who fight with astonishing bravery, the unwavering commitment of partners and supporters, and the steady encouragement of friends and colleagues who walk this journey with us.

As the Executive Director of AMH, I carry both the privilege and the burden of witnessing these realities up close and personal. I believe God has led me to this position—a calling that demands presence, compassion, and faith. This work is not merely an occupation; it is a ministry.

Let's continue to pray for strength and guidance as we walk alongside families through moments of healing and farewell.

This Annual Report tells the story of what we did in 2025, a year marked by growth, grief, and grace. It is also a call for us to remain steadfast in love, no matter the cost. ■



Nancy Caluya-Nicolas

# A Short History of Adonai's Mercy House

Shane and Aimee Wallenda never set out to start a foundation. Back in 2012, the couple from Walla Walla, Washington, simply wanted to help.

It began with shoeboxes—small gifts filled with essentials and toys for impoverished Filipino children battling cancer. Then came a modest Christmas party, funded by \$500 they managed to raise. At the time, it seemed like a simple act of kindness. They had no idea it was the beginning of something much bigger.

Three years into their quiet charity work, Shane turned to his Filipina wife and declared, "We will have a foundation, and it will be called Adonai's Mercy House."

Aimee laughed. "We're not that rich," she thought. But as they would soon realize, when God plants a mission in your heart, He also makes a way.

Then they met Prince.

Prince was five years old, blind, and fighting cancer. His greatest wish? To meet his hero, Coco Martin, the famous Filipino actor. In his imagination, Coco was the father he never had—a source of comfort in an otherwise painful reality. Aimee shared his story on Facebook, hoping for a kind word or a prayer from well-wishers. She never expected what happened next.

The post went viral. Days later, Coco Martin himself reached out and met Prince, making the boy's dream come true.



RENOWNED FILIPINO ACTOR, COCO MARTIN, TREATS PRINCE TO HIS FAVORITE FOOD

Shortly after, Prince passed away. His death shook the Wallendas. They couldn't stop thinking about the children whose battles ended not because of the illness itself, but because poverty stole their chance to fight.

How many more "Princes" were out there?

That question led them to scripture. One day, seeking guidance, they opened to Revelation 22:2: "Down the middle of the great street of the city, on each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Then, something remarkable happened.

Aimee received a gift—a money tree. It was just a small houseplant, but to her, it was a sign. "I couldn't help but see the connection between the leaves that heal the nations and this tree," she recalled.

And so, the Wallendas embraced the calling they once thought impossible.

For a decade, they tirelessly fundraised in Walla Walla, Washington, rallying support for Filipino children with cancer. Then, in 2023, they decided to take things to the next level. They met with Ms. Nancy Nicolas, a seasoned development worker with a heart for the cause. One

(CONT'D. TO NEXT PAGE)...



THE WALLENDAS IN 2012



SHANE WALLEENDA AND REINER PUNO, THEN CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOT OF MARY JOHNSTON HOSPITAL, HOLD THE PARTNERSHIP CERTIFICATE AS DR. GLENN PARASO, MJH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LOOKS ON.



CONSECRATION SERVICE OF THE PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY WARD AT MJH.

month later, Nancy became the first Executive Director of Adonai's Mercy House.

Her first instinct was to call a close friend who is a medical doctor—Dr. Glenn Roy V. Paraso, Executive Director and CEO of Mary Johnston Hospital (MJH).

That call changed everything.

“Would your organization be interested in partnering with MJH to run a pediatric oncology ward?” Dr. Paraso asked after a half-an-hour of discussion. “There’s a vacant ward we can renovate.”

Nancy relayed the offer to Shane and Aimee. Their response? Overwhelming gratitude. This was the opportunity they had

prayed for—a chance to create a dedicated space for young cancer patients in a private hospital in the Philippines.

On August 26, 2024, that vision became reality.

The newly renovated Pediatric Oncology Ward at Mary Johnston Hospital was consecrated—a sanctuary of healing and hope. The ceremony was led by Dr. Paraso, MJH Board Chairperson Reiner Puno, Nancy Nicolas, and the Wallendas, who stood in awe of how far their journey had come.

With four beds, the ward offers round-the-clock care, led by a pediatric oncologist and a team of dedicated nurses. It is a small but

powerful beginning.

For Shane and Aimee, Adonai's Mercy House has never been about wealth or resources—it has always been about faith. They continue to marvel at how doors open just when they need them to.

And through it all, they remember Prince.

His story was the spark that lit this mission, a reminder of why they do what they do. Today, Adonai's Mercy House stands as a beacon of hope for children and families facing the darkest moments of their lives—proof that even the smallest act of compassion can grow into something extraordinary. ■

# 2025: A Year of Growth, Grief, and Grace

‘Remaining Faithful to the Mission of Mercy and Care Through Hills and Valleys’

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 marked a significant turning point for Adonai's Mercy House (AMH) for several reasons:

- We began professionalizing AMH's program implementation and financial management systems.
- We established an office in Quezon City to serve as a hub for regular administrative operations.
- We launched the Pediatric Oncology Ward at Mary Johnston Hospital.
- We implemented several new programs and activities.
- We opened doors to partnerships with various organizations.

While our resources remained limited, we witnessed God's mercy and compassion sustaining our work. Anchored in faith and prayer, we set higher goals and carried out activities that initially seemed beyond our reach. Time and again, we saw how Christ responded to the needs of children, using Adonai's Mercy House as His instrument.

We are pleased to share with you our accomplishments over the past twelve months.

## I. ADMINISTRATION

### 1. Office Acquisition

In February, we began renting an office at the second floor of Christian Language Study Center, at #8 Heroes Hill, Quezon City.

The office has enabled us to systematize our operations and strengthen the public image of Adonai's Mercy House. We purchased essential office furniture and supplies, installed a television set, telephone, and Wi-Fi connection, and put up AMH signage.

### 2. Staffing

Our current staff complement includes:

**Nancy Nicolas**  
*Executive Director*

**Jehann Ong**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Fort Nicolas**  
*Communications and Resource Development Consultant*

**Josephine Frias**  
*Volunteer, Maintenance*

### 3. Accounting and Management Systems

In March, we engaged M.D. Fisico Accounting Office to handle our accounting and management systems. Their services include recording and updating financial transactions, as well as preparing and submitting reports to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and other regulatory agencies.



AMH STAFF AT WORK AT QUEZON CITY OFFICE

II. PROGRAMS

Children Beneficiaries:

Old

	Name	Age	Sex	Medical Findings/Diagnosis	Status
1.	Alba, Christian Dominique	20	M	Malignant Peripheral Nerve Sheath Tumor	Remission
2.	Bermejo, Sopiagail M.	12	F	Autism Spectrum Disorder Attention Deficit/hyperactivity disorder	Continuing treatment
3.	Bermejo, Yuan	9	M	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Continuing treatment
4.	De Guzman, Princess Ivy	15	F	Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	Remission
5.	Dela Cruz, Raiven	10	M	Retinoblastoma	Eye removed and replaced it with artificial eyeball.
6.	Enriquez, Althea	19	F	Beta Thalassemia	Regular blood transfusions
7.	Escobal, Mariel H.	21	F	Chronic ITP	Graduated
8.	Formento, Noah Jade A.	8	M	Beta Thalassemia Major	Regular blood transfusions
9.	Garganera, Daniel P.	20	M	Focal Epilepsy, Structural Schizencephaly, Cerebral Palsy Spastic Quadriplegia	PT/ OT Rehab
10.	Gumabay, Patixia Gail	13	F	Anaplastic Ependymoma	Remission but regular monitoring
11.	Gurrobat, Leslie Jovial F.	18	F	Acute lymphocytic leukemia	Remission
12.	Jumantoc, Ian Gabriel	21	M	Acute lymphoblastic leukemia	Remission
13.	Luzano, Brian S.	17	M	Acute lymphoblastic leukemia	Remission
14.	Magbanua, Ma. Xia Erin	7	F	Acute lymphoblastic leukemia	Remission
15.	Manalo, Yhuna A.	15	F	Focal Epilepsy, t/c idiopathic	PT Rehab
16.	Manuel, Gabrielle Jench	16	M	Acute lymphoblastic leukemia	Remission
17.	Murillo, Matina Jhayne	5	F	Beta Thalassemia	Remission
18.	Onilan, Justin	9	M	Liver Abscess	
19.	Palomo, Elijah Jay	6	M	Congenital Heart Dis. Dextrocardia	Regular Monitoring

	Name	Age	Sex	Medical Findings/Diagnosis	Status
20.	Papa, Mark Vincent	13	M	Cerebral Palsy special Quadriplegia Focal Epilepsy Myopic Astigmatism	PT
21.	Pilapil, Samantha Lorein M.	14	F	Retinoblastoma	Remission
22.	Realisan, Mary Angel M.	19	F	Immune Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP)/ Scoliosis	Remission
23.	Regala, John Joric A.	15	M	Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	Remission
24.	Saldana, Wilfredo Jr.	9	M	Hydrocephalus, Neurocutaneous Melanosis with cerebral Palsy	
25.	Sesno, Vince Darren	15	M	Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	Remission
26.	Tuico, Reese Micah	17	F	Lymphangioma Hemangioma Complex	
27.	Yumul, Zeke Aiden	5	M	Biliary Atresia	

New (Oncology Ward Patients)

	Name	Age	Sex	Diagnosis	Status
1.	Asis, Ace Andrew	9	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
2.	Bergado, Sonny Boy Jr.	11	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk; Bone Marrow	Relapse/On going chemo treatment
3.	Cahigas, Azriel Ziv	4	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, Standard Risk	On going Chemo treatment
4.	Cubico, Anne E.	5	F	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
5.	Estrella, Jonalyn S.	14	F	Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia	On going Chemo treatment
6.	Farro, Gabrile Matthew	8	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
7.	Flores, McFrancis Pierre	2	M	Langerhans Histiocytosis	On going Chemo treatment
8.	Gante, Kiv Mithrandir	6	M	Recurrent Ewing's Sarcoma, Retroperitoneal	On going Chemo treatment
9.	Igma, Andrew	12	M	Optic Pathway Glioma	On going Chemo treatment
10.	Keh, Johanne Dorothy	8	F	B Cell ALL, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
11.	Lapiad, Hyacinth Eve H.	13	F	Mediastinal Mass T-Cell, Malignancy	On going Chemo treatment

Name	Age	Sex	Diagnosis	Status
12. Nicolas, Leiara Louise	1	F	Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocystosis	On going Chemo treatment
13. Pabello, Rovin Bryant	16	M	High Risk Medulloblastoma	On going Chemo treatment
14. Perez, Arhil Andy E.	11	M	Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocystosis	On going Chemo treatment
15. Roxas, Kai Aiden	3	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, Standard Risk	On going Chemo treatment
16. Saliling, Alinor	10	M	Bycypopenia secondary to Acute Leukemia	On going Chemo treatment
17. Tanate, Raymark	13	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
18. Tolentino, Lyra Mae	9	F	T Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	On going Chemo treatment
19. Banquicio, Joe Nathan	9	M	Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocystosis	On going Chemo treatment
20. Dandan, Rafa Matthew	9	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	On going Chemo treatment
21. Gabasan, Kris Nygel	8	M	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia	On going Chemo treatment
22. Lungay, Louise Katherine	12	F	B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	On going Chemo treatment
23. Lucas, Aimos Benette	1	M	Wilms Tumor (Left Kidney)	On going Chemo treatment

Deceased

1. Lars Axel Angeles	5	M	Spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, microcephaly, scoliosis, asthma, with gastrostomy tube	March 27, 2025
2. Matthew Gillado	7	M	Multiple congenital anomalies; multiple craniofacial deformities	Oct. 1, 2025
3. Krystal Mae De Guzman	9		B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	July 21, 2025
4. Mier Akio Gozano	10		B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, High Risk	Dec. 4, 2025
5. Kelvin Clyde Yrigan	2		Acute Myeloid Leukemia	Nov. 20, 2025

**1. Pediatric Oncology Ward**

We began admitting children to our Pediatric Oncology Ward in January 2025. Children and their guardians typically arrive a day before treatment to allow adequate rest. They are monitored by a pediatrician and nurses stationed within the ward. Meals are provided free of charge.

After treatment, families are not required to rush home; they may remain in the ward for observation and recovery in a calm and supportive environment.

As of December 31, records show more than 70 admissions involving 23 patients who underwent chemotherapy and blood transfusions.

Patients were able to access PhilHealth benefits for chemotherapy, laboratory tests, and lodging expenses, as all parents had secured government health insurance membership.

Feedback from parents and caregivers has been overwhelmingly positive. Many shared that their children looked forward to returning for treatment and were no longer traumatized by injections. Parents also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to rest and sleep soundly while staying in the ward.

**2. Medical Assistance to Other Beneficiaries**

AMH continued to provide financial assistance to beneficiaries receiving treatment in hospitals

other than Mary Johnston Hospital. Assistance covered laboratory fees, medicines, transportation, and other needs as assessed. Burial assistance was also extended to the families of five children who passed away during the year.

**3. Caring for Parents and Carers Program**

**3.1 Parenting Support**

In partnership with Parenting Inside and Out, led by Ms. Ting Valdez, and coordinated by our Founder, Ms. Aimee Wallenda, we launched a parenting support program in February focusing on holistic wellness—physical, psychological, mental, and spiritual.

Two online training sessions were conducted by Ms. Elizabeth Preston (AMH-US Partner) and Ms. Ting Valdez (AMH-US Board of Trustees Member) on Creative Journaling and Parent Development. Additional licensed psychologists and counselors facilitated the sessions to encourage participation and engagement.

The workshops were attended by AMH-Philippines staff and parents of children battling cancer. Participants described the sessions as “empowering” and expressed eagerness

to continue learning and strengthening their coping skills.

These courses need to reach more parents. Modules for the next batches are currently being translated into Filipino to improve accessibility and comprehension.

**3.2 Massage Therapy Training**

Two sessions of massage therapy training were conducted for caregivers, facilitated by Mrs. Lilia Bejer, a veteran massage therapist and TESDA-certified trainer. The sessions focused on techniques to ease pain, provide comfort, and help children relax and sleep better.

DoTerra oils were distributed for home use. These sessions will continue until caregivers have mastered sufficient techniques. Parents may also apply these skills as a potential livelihood.

**3.3 Healing Garden Update**

The Healing Garden continues to serve as an important space for holistic healing. After therapy sessions, children enjoy the small playground equipped with a swing, seesaw, playhouse, and various toys. Their laughter—often ringing



CHILDREN ENJOY PLAYING AT THE HEALING GARDEN AFTER THEIR TREATMENT

through the garden—reminds us that they are children first, not merely patients.

#### 4. Visiting Groups

We were blessed to welcome three visiting groups from the United States:

- Raymond Ramos and Friends (Los Angeles)
- Lace Goodwin and Friends (Los Angeles)
- Relatives and the mother of Joyce Vives (San Francisco)

The United Methodist Women in Faith – Philippines Annual Conference formally partnered with AMH and included it among their ministries. Members visited twice, counseling and praying with the children and parents, and distributing food and gifts.

On December 22, Ms. Marilyn Ried, a supporter from Seattle, celebrated her 70th birthday with children battling cancer at Mary Johnston Hospital. She described the occasion as “the most meaningful birthday celebration I ever had.”

These visits brought joy and comfort to our young cancer warriors and their caregivers, while visitors themselves were deeply moved by the children’s resilience and quiet strength.

#### 5. Events and Celebrations

In observance of Children’s Cancer Month, a family gathering was held on August 30 at the Healing Garden, themed “From Cancer Patients to Photographers.”

Organized in partnership with Juan Portrait and Macquarie, the event trained children and parents in photography, offering a creative outlet and a new perspective on life.

In partnership with Unilab, Inc., two Children’s Month celebrations were held—one at the Unilab compound and another at Mary Johnston Hospital’s Gumersindo Garcia Conference Hall. More than 100 parents, children and volunteers attended the said celebrations.

A Christmas Celebration and Thanksgiving was held on December 5, 2025, at the Gumersindo Garcia Conference Hall. More than 100 children, parents, volunteers, and staff attended. Children who had recently passed away were remembered and honored. Despite emotional moments, the gathering was filled with joy, especially as families shared meals and received Christmas gifts.



AMH BOT MEMBERS DISCUSS FUTURE PLANS FOR THE ORGANIZATION

#### 6. Resource Generation and Communication

##### 6.1 Publications and Digital Presence

We launched the regular publication of our monthly e-newsletter, Adonai’s Herald, releasing nine issues in 2025. We also regularly shared beneficiary stories on Facebook and improved our website to expand stakeholder engagement and provide timely updates.

##### 6.2 Engagement with Government and Mainstream Media

We made progress in establishing initial connections with mainstream media outlets and government institutions, including newspapers, radio stations, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. These efforts aim to strengthen AMH’s public credibility and support future logistical and resource partnerships.



CHILDREN AT THE WARD SMILE AT THE CAMERA AFTER THERAPY

Unilab Inc. the leading pharmaceutical company in the Philippines had officially included Adonai as its regular partner. As such, we can expect yearly sponsorship of Children’s Month Celebration and their outreach program.

##### 6.3 Resource Generation Proposals

Two resource-generation proposals are currently under Board review:

Upgrading Promotional and Fundraising Tools- A proposal was presented to elevate Adonai’s Herald into a digital magazine with enhanced content and professional design. This was later amended to explore a potential print version. A feasibility study is ongoing.

In the meantime, we plan to expand our online presence through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok,

in addition to our website and Facebook page. Studies show that audiences retain up to 95% of messages presented through photos and videos, compared to 10% for text-only content.

#### III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Members of the AMH-US and AMH-Philippines Boards and staff participated in a retreat and fundraising event held in Walla and Seattle in June. The event strengthened relationships among board members, management, and partners, and reinforced shared commitment to the mission of Adonai’s Mercy House.

#### CONCLUSION

The year 2025 was a year marked by growth, loss, grief, grace, and hope. As we strengthened our internal systems, expanded our programs, and deepened

partnerships, we also walked closely with suffering families, including some whose beloved children have passed on.

Our mission must remain clear even as we go through hills and valleys during our journey: to offer material, emotional, and spiritual support to young cancer warriors and their caregivers.

Through the rollercoaster of emotions, we witnessed God’s sustaining grace at work. We are blessed with dedicated staff and volunteers, generous partners and donors, and cooperative beneficiaries.

We are resolved to move forward with renewed commitment and faith. We trust that love, compassion, and mercy will continue to guide Adonai’s Mercy House as it serves the brave cancer warriors and their families. May God bless AMH. Amen! ■

## Sanctuary in the Heart of Tondo

By Jehann Tablando-Ong



HONORING GRACE VIVES BRIDGER

### Where Hope Takes Root

By Jasna Claudine C. Nicolas

Adjacent to the pediatric oncology unit of Adonai's Mercy House lies a sacred space we call The Healing Garden—a place where hope blossoms and peace quietly takes root.

For the young warriors in the ward, the conclusion of a chemotherapy session or a blood transfusion isn't just a medical milestone; it is the signal to an access to a much-awaited sanctuary.

Tucked away in the heart of the hospital's second floor, this garden is far more than a collection of soil and flora. It is a refuge where the clinical hum of the ward fades, replaced by the rhythmic creak of swings and the soft clatter of a see-saw.

In this space, we witness a profound truth: recovery is a slow,

(CONT'D. TO P.15)...



AN IMPROMPTU BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AT THE PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY UNIT

In the bustling heart of Tondo, within the newly renovated walls of Mary Johnston Hospital, a quiet defiance is taking place.

Inside the pediatric oncology ward of Adonai's Mercy House, you might find four or five young "warriors" huddled together. Some are asleep; others are momentarily lost in play.

For a few precious hours, the heavy shroud of their diagnosis—a weight that usually hangs over their heads like a literal sword of Damocles—seems to vanish.

This is no mere medical facility. It is a sanctuary.

A collaborative labor of love between Mary Johnston Hospital and Adonai's Mercy House (AMH), this ward was reimagined with a singular

vision: to provide expert clinical care in a space where children are still permitted to be children.

Here, the sterile fear typically associated with needles and white coats is replaced by a bright, comforting atmosphere that invites a rare exhale.

"It's different now," one mother explains, her voice reflecting a mix of relief and wonder. "Before, my child feared every hospital visit. Now? He actually looks forward to coming here."

But the serenity of the ward belies a rigorous, ongoing struggle. AMH is currently anchoring the spirits of 24 children in their active fight against cancer, adding to the legacy of more than more than a hundred young warriors the organization has championed during its first decade in the Philippines.

(CONT'D. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE...)

The reality of this mission is as sobering as it is inspiring: nearly half of those children have already lost their battles. Yet, it is in their memory that AMH doubles down on its resolve, ensuring that no family has to face the "at-risk" phase alone.

The logistics of mercy are precise. Each week, four or five new patients arrive. Currently, of the 24 primary beneficiaries, 11 have reached a stable enough plateau for maintenance chemotherapy at MJH. Nine are still navigating the precarious "at-risk" phase, while four are now enjoying eternal rest.

Those at-risk patients often stay at Tondo Medical Center, where specialized facilities manage their complications. The goal is always the same: to get them strong enough to transition back to the sanctuary of the MJH ward.

Ultimately, the work of Adonai's Mercy House reminds us that healing is a process, a part of which is found in the creation of a space where a child can breathe, smile, and find the fragments of strength needed to keep going.

This sanctuary, however, is not a static monument—it is a living mission that requires constant nourishment.

As AMH continues to knock on the hearts of those willing to stand with these children, the invitation remains open: to be the difference between fear and hope, and to ensure that for these young warriors do not walk alone in the perilous journey toward healing. ■

### Journeys Toward Healing



## The First Footfall in the House of Mercy

On Jan. 27, 2025, the newly renovated pediatric oncology ward at Mary Johnston Hospital (MJH) sat in a state of sacred expectation. The floors were polished to a mirror shine, and the air held a crystalline stillness. It was a sanctuary waiting for its first soul.

That first footfall belonged to one-year-old McFrancis "Mac-Mac" Flores.

For his parents, Jomer and Mariel, life had been a simple, happy song until shortly after Mac-Mac's first birthday last August. Instead of the steady rhythm of toddler steps and the sweet babble of new words, their world began to tilt. They watched in quiet heartbreak as their son grew weary. His scalp became tender and scaled, and a persistent pain took hold of his small frame.

The diagnosis was a heavy one: Langerhans cell histiocytosis. In the quiet language of the heart, we might say the "tiny soldiers" in Mac-Mac's body—the cells designed to be his fierce protectors—had become confused. Instead of guarding his body like a fortress, they began to dismantle the very walls they were meant to defend.

When Mac-Mac was carried into the ward that morning, his cries echoed through the quiet hallways—a raw, rhythmic sound of a little body pushed to its limit. But he did not enter that silence alone. The team from Adonai's Mercy House (AMH), led by Executive

Director Nancy Nicolas, was there to meet the family. They offered the kind of grounded compassion that serves as an anchor when the waves of illness grow too high.

The most poignant moment came when the medical staff had to guide a needle into Mac-Mac's small arm to begin his treatment. His wail was heart-wrenching, a sharp reminder to everyone present that while the ward was new and beautiful, the journey ahead would be an arduous, uphill climb.

Yet, Mac-Mac is not fighting in the dark. He is the first of 22 "young warriors" who will find refuge in this special ward. Together, they form a fellowship of brave children, supported by a much larger community of hands and hearts.

This ward is more than a medical facility; it is a place built on the foundation of mercy. We often think of mercy as a grand concept, but here, it is simply love in action. Whether through a whispered prayer, a volunteer's time, or a financial gift, every act of kindness brings Mac-Mac and his fellow warriors one step closer to the day they can lay down their shields and simply go back to being children. ■

## The Boy Who Sees with His Heart

If you were to stand on a fishing boat in the middle of Manila Bay, the world would look like a giant, beautiful painting. For 11-year-old Andrew Igma, this was home. Being the son of a fisherman meant his days were filled with “ocean blue,” the “shimmery silver” of his father’s morning catch, and the “liquid gold” of the sun as it tucked itself behind the waves at night.

But lately, Andrew’s world has begun to change. It is as if someone is slowly turning down the brightness on a TV screen. The colors aren’t just fading; they are being tucked away, like a book being closed before the story is finished.

Imagine waking up and realizing the edges of your favorite toy look a little fuzzy. Imagine looking at your mom or dad and seeing a soft blur instead of a clear smile. This is the quiet world Andrew lives in now.

When Andrew was nine, a “hidden thief”—a brain tumor—began to grow inside him. Because his family is poor, they didn’t have the tools to catch the thief in time. By the time doctors found it, the illness had already started to take away Andrew’s sight.

It makes us want to ask a very big, very hard question: Why? Why should a boy who loves the bright colors of the sea have to live in the

shadows?

But even though the light in Andrew’s eyes is dimming, a new kind of light is turning on inside him. He is not walking this dark path by himself.

A group called Adonai’s Mercy House (AMH) has stepped in to be his “lighthouse.” They are a team of people who help young

“cancer warriors” like Andrew, making sure his family has the help and hope they need to keep going.

There is a beautiful secret in Andrew’s journey. Sometimes, when our physical eyes fail, God gives us a different way to see. We call it “seeing with the heart.”

Even if the world goes dark, Andrew is learning to see things that ordinary people often miss. He can feel the warmth of love more



clearly; he can “see” the beauty of a sunset through the kindness of a friend. In this special way, his world is still full of color—colors even more vivid than the ones on his father’s boat.

We invite you to join the team at Adonai’s Mercy House. By helping Andrew and his family, you aren’t just giving money or time; you are helping a young boy realize that even when it’s dark, he is never truly alone. ■

### Takes Root... (CONT'D. FROM PAGE 13)

sacred process that requires room to breathe. Amidst the “balete” branches and unfurling petals, the air carries a different frequency. Here, children who have spent the day defined as “patients” finally reclaim the right to be kids.

The garden serves three distinct

souls: For the young cancer warriors, it is a canvas for paint and play under an open sky. For the parents, it is a quiet corner to gather the scattered fragments of their strength. For the staff of the hospital as well as the Adonai’s Mercy House, it is a momentary

respite to renew their hearts for the daily labor of love.

This living testament to grace was made possible through the profound generosity of the families of Mrs. Shri Sing and Mrs. Grace Vives Bridges. By gifting the funds for this “happy place,” they have



## The 90-Day Clock and the Love That Broke It

they saw an opportunity for a miracle.

They asked Ian for 12 “dying wishes.” For a 12-year-old, these weren’t grand demands for fame or fortune. They were simple, beautiful requests to feel human again. Ian wanted to go shopping with his mom, Giselle. He wanted the simple joy of holding a new toy.

Something miraculous happens when you give a child a reason to smile: their body starts to listen.

As AMH helped Ian tick off those 12 wishes, something shifted. The “90-day clock” kept ticking, but Ian didn’t stop. The three months passed. Then six. Then a year. Every time Ian felt the darkness closing in, he looked at his mother.

“I was tempted to give up,” Ian says today, his voice soft but steady. “But every time I saw my mother, I knew I had to keep fighting. She never gave up on me, not even for a second.”

At 12 years old, most kids are worried about exams, sports, or fitting in. But for Ian Gabriel Jumantoc, the only thing on the horizon was a clock—and it was ticking down fast. The doctors were blunt: he had 90 days.

Leukemia had turned his world into a blur of sterile hospital hallways and “no.” No more school. No more playing outside. No more future. To the medical world, Ian wasn’t a boy anymore; he was a case file with an expiration date.

But Adonai’s Mercy House (AMH) has always believed that while medicine treats the body, mercy protects the soul. When they heard about Ian’s “final” three months, they didn’t see a tragedy—

Today, Ian isn’t a statistic. He is a 21-year-old man. If you visit his local parish, you’ll find him serving faithfully as a sacristan—a living, breathing reminder that hope is a stronger medicine than anything found in a pharmacy.

Ian’s story is a “miracle of the heart,” but it wouldn’t have happened without the bridge built by Adonai’s Mercy House. AMH gave Ian the “oxygen of love” he needed to breathe when the world told him his time was up.

Ian fought his battle. Now, there are other children—other “young warriors”—standing at their own 90-day clocks. They are waiting for their first wish. They are waiting for their own miracle. When you donate to Adonai’s Mercy House, you aren’t just giving money; you are buying time. You are giving a mother the chance to keep holding her son’s hand until the shadows finally retreat. ■

ensured that their legacies do not merely rest in the past, but bloom in the present.

Today, their names are synonymous with the laughter that echoes against these walls and the prayers that rise like incense through the leaves.

Dedicated to bringing light into the most difficult days, The Healing Garden stands as a reminder that God’s comfort often arrives in the simplest of veils: the scent of damp earth, the whisper of a breeze, and the resilient spirit of every child who walks through its gates.

As the sun sets over the ward, the garden remains—a quiet promise that there is always a place to rest after a hard journey. ■

# Kiv, the Kid Who Dances His 'Big C' Away

By Jasna Claudine C. Nicolas

For two days and two nights, Kiv's mother stood in line, clutching hope as tightly as she held her son's small hand.

"It was so hard," Carla P. Gante recalled softly. "We went to the hospital and waited 48 hours. We lined up, but we weren't accommodated."

"Forty-eight hours. Two whole days," she repeated, "before we were even noticed."

Perhaps Kiv did not look sick?

Because Kiv did not appear weak or frail, they were often overlooked. "They prioritized the patients who looked very limp, almost collapsing," Carla said. "Kiv would only sit down when the pain became too much. But most of the time, he was running."

"His pain wasn't continuous," her mother explained. "There were times he would cry, but then he'd be going off running again. He's very active—always running, always dancing."

In fact, she smiled at the memory. "He was the best dancer during a Christmas party. He's always been my joy."



After two days of waiting, exhaustion crept in. "I told myself, 'It seems like nothing is happening for us here.'"

Looking back, she understands why they did not suspect anything serious. "Kiv was never sickly when he was small. He was so active. We didn't expect he could have that kind of illness."

Kiv was diagnosed in 2022. She was barely over a year old—"maybe one year and eight months," her mother estimated. "He was still very young, but already mature. He could talk. He could express himself."

The tumor was discovered late, not because of neglect, but because there were no obvious signs.

"He didn't have severe symptoms. His stomach wasn't obviously bloated. He was chubby, so I didn't notice there was something in his belly."

By the time doctors found it, the tumor measured 13 centimeters.

"The oncologist said it was big for his age," Carla shared. "Thirteen centimeters. The doctor said that for someone so young, that was already large."

The plan was clear but frightening. "They told us they had to shrink the tumor first before they could remove it."

When Kiv was first diagnosed, they chose not to tell her. "At that time, we hid it from him," Kiv's mother admitted. "He wouldn't understand yet."

But Kiv was perceptive.

"He already knew how to ask, 'How are you? Does it hurt?' Kiv was smart," Carla said. "By the time he was three or four, he began to realize he was very sick because our visits to the hospital became more frequent. We stayed for weeks sometimes."

They never formally explained it. "He just understood," she said quietly. "When he saw the lump, he knew."

Behind the strength of this little boy stood two parents learning to be strong themselves.

"At first, of course, we cried," she confessed. "That's how it was. First, tears. Then, acceptance."

Today, Kiv is five years old. Still bright. Still brave. Still dancing when he can.

And her mother still holds his hand. ■



## From "Warriors" to Photographers

It began as a typical morning at the Healing Garden, a quiet gathering organized by Adonai's Mercy House. The young cancer warriors arrived early, settling into the stillness of the greenery and flowers of various colors.

But the atmosphere shifted the moment Robert Ilagan introduced them to the alchemy of creative photography. The true transformation occurred when the weight of a camera finally met their hands. Eyes that had seen too many hospital walls suddenly sparked with wonder. In an instant, these children were no longer defined by a diagnosis—they have become photographers.

They moved through the garden with a newfound intentionality, framing the world in light and shadow. Leaves, petals, the arc of a fountain, and the weathered wood of a pergola were no longer mere background; they became masterpieces.

Guided by the passionate mentors of Juan Portrait, led by Eynna Academia and supported by

the Macquarie team, each child discovered a shift in perspective, literally and figuratively. Watching from the periphery, parents looked on with quiet joy as their children captured glimpses of beauty that had previously gone unnoticed.

While the morning's work moved to the printer, Ben Academia of The Storytelling Project—a sister non-governmental organization (NGO) to Juan Portrait—spun narratives that held the children spellbound. This was followed by a burst of color as Saree Luistro led an art session, inviting the children to channel their inner Picassos onto paper.

When the gloss of the printed photos finally met the children's gaze, the Garden erupted in laughter. What was conceived as a simple workshop had blossomed



into a profound celebration of life. There is a sacred joy in witnessing the world through fresh eyes.

As the morning drew to a close, AMH Executive Director Nancy C. Nicolas presented plaques of gratitude to Juan Portrait and Macquarie. Yet, the most enduring tribute wasn't etched in wood or metal; it was found in the lingering sparkle in the children's eyes—a realization that they now possessed a lens capable of finding beauty in every corner of their healing journey. ■

# Mercy in Action



## Behind-the-Scene Heroes

By Fort Nicolas

At Adonai's Mercy House, we call the children fighting cancer "young warriors." But every warrior has a guardian—a mom, a dad, or a family member—standing right beside them. In the middle of a hard battle, these grown-ups often forget to take care of themselves because they are so busy caring for the children. This brings up a very important question: Who takes care of the caretakers?

### A Quiet Place in the Mind

The answer begins inside the mind. Recently, a partner of AMH named Elizabeth Preston held an online class for these parents. She helped them travel away from the sights and sounds of the hospital and into a "secret place" of peace in their imaginations.

"Every now and then, try using the hand you don't usually write with to draw or doodle," Elizabeth suggested. This simple trick wakes up the creative side of the brain. She invited the mothers to take a deep breath and let go of their heavy worries for a moment.

This isn't just playing pretend; it is a way to stay strong. When we are creative, the "noise" of worry gets quieter. It reminds these parents that they are important people, too.

### Art for the Heart

Ting Valdez, a member of the Board of Trustees for AMH-US, last year guided a group of parents through the emotional landscape of their journey in a series of "Parenting From the Inside Out" workshops. Supported by Cindy Sarayan and Charon Anderson, Ting led these virtual sessions over the course of five weeks,

creating a space that functioned as much more than a simple meeting.

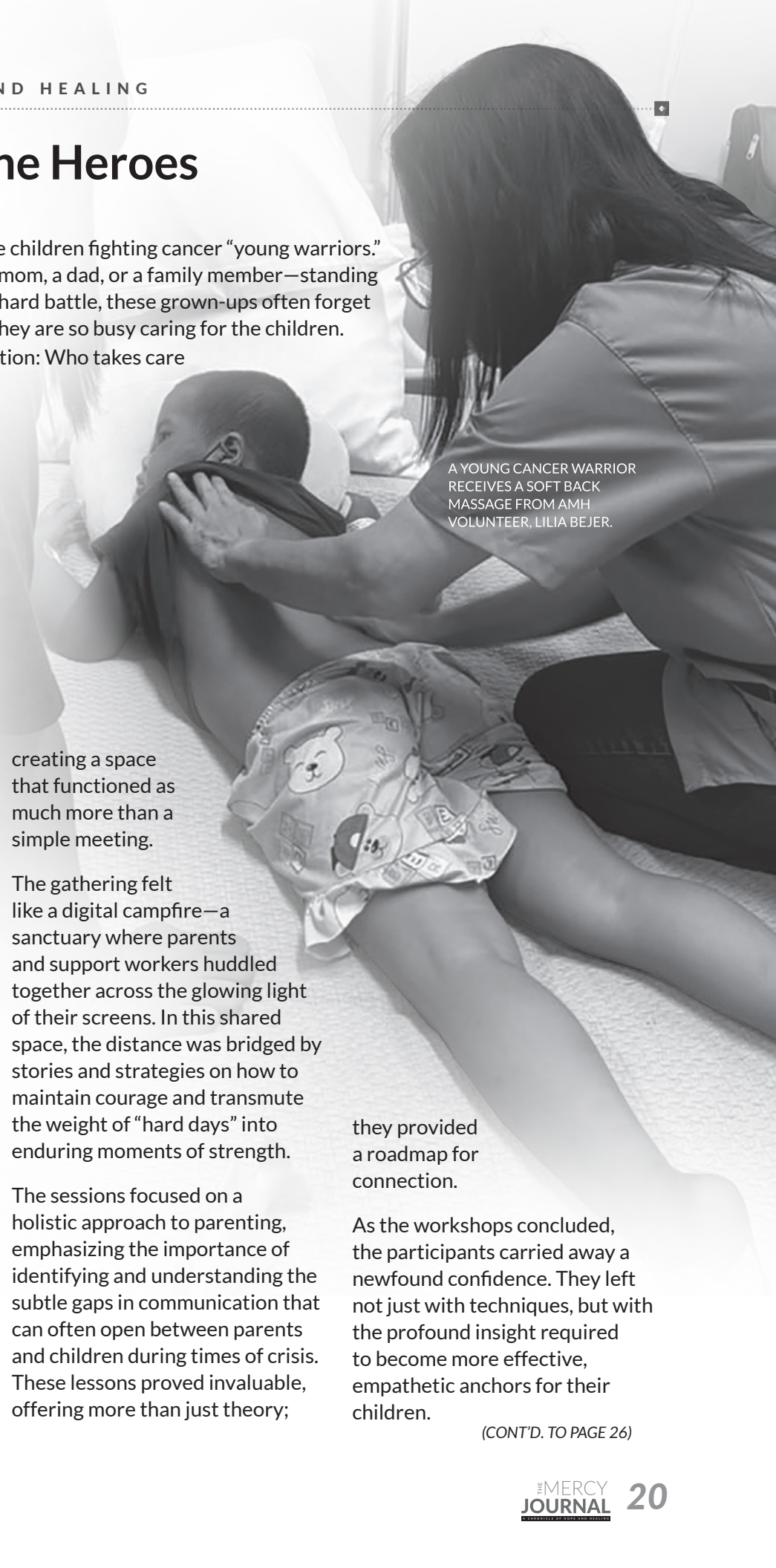
The gathering felt like a digital campfire—a sanctuary where parents and support workers huddled together across the glowing light of their screens. In this shared space, the distance was bridged by stories and strategies on how to maintain courage and transmute the weight of "hard days" into enduring moments of strength.

The sessions focused on a holistic approach to parenting, emphasizing the importance of identifying and understanding the subtle gaps in communication that can often open between parents and children during times of crisis. These lessons proved invaluable, offering more than just theory;

they provided a roadmap for connection.

As the workshops concluded, the participants carried away a newfound confidence. They left not just with techniques, but with the profound insight required to become more effective, empathetic anchors for their children.

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A YOUNG CANCER WARRIOR RECEIVES A SOFT BACK MASSAGE FROM AMH VOLUNTEER, LILIA BEJER.



## Love is **Alive** at Unilab

MANDALUYONG CITY — For the second consecutive year, the massive Unilab headquarters transformed into a sanctuary of hope for poor Filipino children battling with cancer.

The leading healthcare firm in the country opened its gate last November 15 to welcome the families of Adonai's Mercy House for a day of fun and games. The air inside was thick with a different kind of energy; and the kids loved it!

Under the gentle guidance of Rexan Dayao, our resilient young warriors traded the weight of their journeys for the light stroke of a paintbrush. As live music drifted through the hall and a magician conjured wonder from thin air, the reality of illness faded, even temporarily. In its place was a chorus of laughter and the crinkle of wrapping paper as Unilab employees shared gifts that were tokens of solidarity.

This gathering is part of the Unilab's milestone 80th anniversary celebration. The truth is, it did more than mark eight

decades of industry; it breathed life into the enduring vision of its founder, Jose Y. Campos. That's what a good heart of a kind individual can do; it can touch lives and heal bodies and souls.

Adonai's Mercy House extends its profound gratitude to the Unilab Employee Relations Group headed by Rex Dayao and Atty. Armida Relucio and the Unilab Employees Council. By generously offering the opportunity to partner with AMH, they allowed a radiant light to break through the darkness that otherwise has settled in the lives of these at-risk children.

That day, the true miracle was visible: the extraordinary volunteerism of the Unilab staff. They proved that while medicine may treat the body, it is love and compassion that sustains the soul. (Jasna Claudine C. Nicolas) ■

## His **Father's** Son

By Heaven Dayao

MANDALUYONG CITY — One can say my first memories of how the operation of community development was from a worm's eye view. Specifically, from beneath the desk of Tita Nancy Nicolas.

As a child, it was my wont to crawl through the legs of chairs of the Lingap Pangkabataan Inc. (LPI) office, where my father, Rexan, used to work as a Program Coordinator.

Looking back from where I stand today, I realize my early years were not a typical childhood but an immersion into the amazing world of social development. Little did I know that my future was being written in the quiet, tireless movements of those who lived for others.

To my father, who stands beside me now as he always has: you have been the steady wind beneath my wings. I hope you see that the legacy of public service did not stop with your generation. As you often remind me, the apple does not fall far from the tree—it simply finds its own soil to bloom in.

I find it peculiar that the same souls who nurtured me from birth are now my companions in this shared advocacy.

Our mission is born from a difficult truth. There is no easy way to carry the weight of cancer, particularly when that burden rests on the shoulders of the young. There is no simple comfort for the families

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## In Memoriam

The Adonai's Mercy House takes great effort to conduct activities that encourage young cancer warriors to shed the heavy skin of "patients" to reveal the vibrant, beating hearts of children.

We build these opportunities for our children to smile and be happy because we are aware of the heavy truth—the nature of the disease they suffer is unforgiving. Sometimes, a life brimming with light dims only days after a shared afternoon of laughter. Their passing is a devastating reminder that for some of them, the joy of these rare occasions is a fleeting gift.

When a child passes, they leave behind a silence that is difficult to name. It is an unspeakable sadness, yes, but it also forged within us a firm resolve. If a life is to be brief, it must be beautiful. Every child deserves to taste the pure, unadulterated sweetness of childhood, and we strive to ensure that they carry with them the memories of what is good.

In this In Memoriam series, we pause. We lower our voices to hear theirs and watch the embers of lives that burned brightly, however briefly. We invite you to sit with us and remember them. These are their stories.

## Mier's Flight Home

I met Mier only three times, yet he occupies a space in my memory that feels decades deep. There was a quiet magnetism to this 10-year-old from Calamba City, a gentleness that drew you in before a single word was ever exchanged. He was undeniably handsome, one of those few children whose very presence invited a hug.

The last time I saw him was at a Christmas party in Quezon City. I can still see him there, walking through the chaos of the festivity with a shy smile. He and his mother, Lounica Aiza "Lou" Gozano, had traveled nearly four hours by bus to be with us at Adonai's Mercy House (AMH). It was a long journey for a tired body, yet Mier carried himself with grace.

We were supposed to see that smile last Dec. 6. His name was

written on our guest list. But early that day, the air turned cold with a numbing message: Mier, our "huggable warrior" who had been battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia since January 2022, had taken his final flight.

In his final days, Lou had sought to give her son a glimpse of the sky. She booked a flight to Cebu, not merely to visit a historic city, but to fulfill Mier's dream of riding an airplane. It was to be a small reward for the two years he had spent tethered to hospital beds and chemotherapy drips.

For 11 cycles, they had chased the promise of healing. They were so close. But then, the leukemia relapsed with a cruel suddenness, demanding they return to the very first step of the climb. They held on to the thin threads of hope in spite of the grim diagnosis.

The vacation was brief. Within a day of arriving in Cebu, Mier began to vomit. A persistent nosebleed signaled a deeper, internal storm. The return trip was a frantic race against time, an ambulance waiting at the Manila airport to rush him to the intensive care unit.

"It all happened too fast," Lou sobbed during our phone conversation. Her voice carried the weight of a mother who had watched her child endure the unendurable. In the final stretch, the agony became a physical weight.

At his weakest, the pain surged so violently that Mier writhed until he fell from his bed to the floor—a moment of raw, human suffering that defies explanation.

When Lou asked her son if he still recognized her through the haze of medication, he replied softly, "Yes. You're my Mom."

Even as his body failed, Mier's heart remained focused on the cost of his care. "I'm so sorry, Mom," he whispered repeatedly, his eyes shimmering with tears. "Sorry for all the difficulties you went through because of me."

In that moment, the roles were reversed; the child became the comforter. Lou could only offer the most difficult permission a mother can give: "It's okay, son. You can rest now."

But Mier would not go yet. He first wanted to see his older brother, Markus. When Markus finally arrived, Mier opened his eyes, offered one last faint smile of recognition, and then drifted back into a slumber that no longer required medicine. At midday, he took a final, deep breath and let the world go.

There was one empty chair when AMH held a Christmas last year. It was supposed to be Mier's. It is easy to imagine that Mier is flying again—this time, with wings of his own. ■

## Sometimes, It Only Takes a Cake and a Candle



It was hushed and unusually quiet at the kids' cancer ward at Mary Johnston Hospital that morning of October 1, 2025. In one of the beds, 7-year-old Kyle Pacaldo was just resting and saving up enough energy to get through another round of chemo scheduled for later that day.

It's a lot for a little guy to carry. But sometimes, the best medicine doesn't come in a syringe.

That afternoon, Nancy Nicolas, head of Adonai's Mercy House (AMH), found out from her administrative officer, Jehann Tablando-Ong, that it was actually Kyle's seventh birthday. Nancy didn't hesitate.

"Wouldn't it be great to see him smile today?" she asked. "Let's get him a cake."

So, they did.

What happened next wasn't a big, fancy party, but it was magic. Other kids who were then admitted in the ward and their moms drifted over. For a little while, the place was full of soft laughter. In the middle of it all was Kyle, wearing a smile

so big it seemed to make the room brighter. For those few minutes, he did not feel any pain.

His mom, Yana, watched with tears in her eyes.

"He really wanted to celebrate turning seven," she said. "But we just didn't have the money for it. I'd promised him we'd have a party as soon as I could earn a little extra."

She never expected that a surprise cake from near-strangers would be the thing to make her son's wish come true.

It's a memory Yana holds onto tightly now, because Kyle isn't with us anymore. He passed away on Jan. 24 after a sudden bout of pneumonia.

He had been a "warrior" since he was only 3 years old. There was a time when the family thought they had finally beaten leukemia, but

it came back. She talks about how much Kyle loved the AMH Christmas party, and how he told her he was happy because "more people came to know him and love him."

Losing a son is a heartbreak that's hard to put into words. But Yana is keeping her head up. "God helped us through every single day of those four years," she told Nancy over the phone. "I'm just praying for the strength to keep going without him."

The party at the ward was just one afternoon, but it was a reminder of something important: a miracle can come on a small budget. Sometimes, all it takes is a cake, a candle, and a community that refuses to let a child fight alone. ■

## The Boy Who Drew Rainbows

Inside the activity hall of the Unilab headquarters in Mandaluyong City, the air was thick with the chatter of 50 young warriors. But 2-year-old Clyde sat on his tiny chair, anchored in a world of his own making.

He clutched a crayon in his small hand as if it were a magic wand, scribbling vibrant arcs of color onto a sheet of paper. His brows were furrowed with that intense, sacred focus only a child can muster—a small creator oblivious to the shadows waiting at the door.

When a colorful clown burst into the room, Clyde's eyes widened, then sparkled with a light that seemed to come from somewhere deep and untouched by illness. He clapped with every ounce of strength his small frame could gather.

When he was handed a gift bag nearly as large as himself, he wrapped his arms around it, a smile stretching so wide it seemed to erase—if only for a fleeting Saturday—the memory of hospital white, the sting of needles, and the heavy weight of whispered prayers.

Most who saw him then could never have imagined it was a farewell. Four days after the party, Clyde lost his quiet battle with leukemia. The boy who drew rainbows and marveled at magic tricks slipped away, leaving behind a world that feels suddenly dimmer.

### The Day the Clock Stopped

Every mother of a young warrior remembers the precise moment

small store just to stay by his side. He is my baby.”

### A Sanctuary in the Storm

The months that followed were a blurred liturgy of chemotherapy, injections, and long vigils within the pediatric oncology ward of Adonai's Mercy House at Mary Johnston Hospital. Arlene learned the heartbreaking skill of holding her toddler still during procedures no child should ever know.

Yet, in the crucible of the ward, she found an unexpected sisterhood. The other mothers became her shoreline. They traded jokes to thin the heaviness; they shared meals and whispered prayers. Their makeshift community was the only thing that kept her from collapsing.

“I still cannot accept it,” Arlene once confessed. “But the other mothers reminded me that hope is never abandoned.”

It was this fragile mixture of pain and grace that carried Clyde through his final months, culminating in that burst of joy at the Unilab event—a morning of crayons and laughter that

her world fractured—the second the doctor's voice changed, and the light in the room seemed to shift. For Arlene Yrigan, that moment arrived on an ordinary morning in May 2025.

She had brought her son, then 20 months old, to the clinic for what she thought was a stubborn cough and a dusting of bruises. Arlene had always been diligent, a mother whose life was a constant vigil of sniffles and fevers. But that day, after the blood tests were tallied, the nurse's gaze lingered too long on the paper.

“Ma'am,” she said softly, “you need to go straight to Tondo Medical Center. Do not go home.” In that silence, Arlene felt her knees weaken.

At the hospital, pneumonia complicated the diagnosis, adding a layer of immediate peril to an already terrifying mystery. Arlene remembers holding Clyde, feeling the furnace of his fever against her skin, praying the universe had made a mistake. But when pediatric oncologist Dr. Lalaine Pablo arrived, she brought the heavy truth: Clyde had acute myeloid leukemia, a relentless thief of the bone marrow and blood.

“It felt like the walls were closing in,” Arlene recalls. “I kept asking, ‘How?’ I gave up my



allowed him to forget, if only for a moment, the gravity of his journey.

### A Life of Light

Clyde's life was heartbreakingly brief, but it was brimming with a love that outshone his diagnosis. He was not defined by the cancer that claimed his breath, but by the eye-twinkling joy he offered to everyone who crossed his path. He was a boy who clapped for magic, who hugged treasures, and who taught those around him that even a short life can be a masterpiece.

Four days before he passed, Clyde was still laughing. Though he has left us far too soon, that laughter remains—a soft, persistent echo in the hearts of those who saw him draw his last rainbow. ■

## Behind-the-Scene Heroes

(CONT'D. FROM PAGE 20)

### The Power of a Kind Touch

Care doesn't just happen on a computer screen; it happens with our hands. At Mary Johnston Hospital, Ate Lilia Bejer, an expert massage therapist, taught parents the art of hilot, which is a traditional Filipino massage.

In a Filipino home, a massage is more than just fixing a sore muscle. It is a way of saying “I love you” without speaking a word. Ate Lilia showed the parents how to massage hands and feet gently. She helped them see that their own hands could become “instruments of healing” for their children.

As they practiced, the hospital room stopped feeling like a cold clinic and started feeling like a warm home. Every gentle touch on a tired foot was a way of saying, “I am here. You are not alone. We are in this together.”

### The Mark of Mercy

Through these classes, parents realized something life-changing: they need to stay healthy and happy so they can help their children stay healthy and happy.

They are in a long, tough fight. To help their young warriors win, the parents must keep their own “tanks” full of bravery and strength. By taking a moment to breathe, create, and touch, they make sure their love never runs dry. ■

## Father's Son

(CONT'D. FROM PAGE 21)

who keep watch, enduring a heartbreak that defies imagination as they witness their loved ones suffer.

Yet, these children are more than their diagnosis. They are thinkers, dreamers, and bearers of beautiful ideas that the world desperately needs to hear. They deserve to be seen, loved, and celebrated as people, not as patients.

We should not be mere spectators but rather actors because we are capable of easing their burdens even by just lending an ear or doing ordinary gestures and acts of assistance. Their daily load is too heavy that any help to lighten it is much appreciated.

So, while many choose to be complacent and ignore those who need help, let us leave a mark of mercy once in a while.

(Heaven conducted the art workshop for Adonai's children during the observance of Children's Month at Unilab Headquarters on November 15, 2025.) ■



## A Gentle Light

Matthew Gillado was born with severely distorted facial and physical features and the fact that he was able to survive for seven years can be considered a medical marvel. At the same time, it was a profound testament to his courage and an unyielding desire to simply live.

To a stranger's eye, Matthew's appearance might have invited a startled or uncomfortable glance—a reaction to the profound physical challenges he carried. But to those of us at Adonai's Mercy House, he was a warm, soft light and a precious member of the family. Matthew was a living reminder of how much grace can be packed into a small, fragile spirit.

We often measure a life by the number of years on a calendar, but Matthew taught us to look for it in the stillness of the moment. We found his strength in his quiet presence during our visits and in the steady resilience he offered up, day after day.

While his time with us was shorter than we ever wished, the footprint he left on our hearts is both deep and permanent. He has now finished his difficult climb, stepping out of the struggle and into a place of perfect, restorative peace.

As we honor his memory, our thoughts turn naturally to his parents, Isabela and Raven. We invite the entire Adonai's Mercy House family to hold them close. Rather than asking for an abrupt end to their grief, we pray for a steady supply of comfort—the kind of strength that doesn't shout, but arrives in whispers when it is needed most.

Matthew is resting now, safe in the eternal arms of Jesus, where pain is a forgotten language and where everyone is beautiful.

We are profoundly grateful that Matthew walked among us, even for a little while. He reminded us that the smallest life can be the grandest inspiration. As long as we carry his memory, his light hasn't gone out—it has simply moved to a brighter room. ■

## Remembering Lars

For many years, Lars Axel Angeles was a steady, quiet presence within the Adonai's Mercy House family. He was a young boy who met the rising tides of illness with a courage that felt as deep as the ocean itself.

There is a rare strength found in those who must navigate the roughest of seas at such a tender age, and Lars possessed it in abundance. While the waves around him were often restless and unpredictable, he maintained an inner stillness—a joy that acted as an anchor for everyone lucky enough to be in his wake.

Lars was never defined by the storm he traveled through. To us, he was a master mariner of the spirit, a living testament to the truth that love can keep a heart afloat even when the horizon feels impossibly far away.

Today, the winds have calmed and the sea is finally still. While Lars's passing brings a heavy salt of sorrow to our hearts, we find a quiet comfort in the knowledge that he has reached a peaceful shore. The voyage was long, and the waters were often dark, but he never lost his way.

Our thoughts and prayers now anchor the Angeles family. Lars has finished his journey; he has let go of the heavy iron of the anchor and taken to the sky, soaring far above the reach of the waves, embraced by a love that is wider than any sea.

Lars was never just a passenger on this journey; he was a beacon of resilience. Though he has sailed beyond our sight, the ripples of his courage will continue to touch our lives for years to come. ■



## A Space Reserved for **Krystal**



Krystal Mae de Guzman never occupied a bed in the pediatric oncology ward of Adonai's Mercy House at Mary Johnston Hospital, yet she had become a regular participant in parties and other get-togethers.

You can say Krystal's name was already woven into the very fabric of our mission. She was a "young warrior" of the spirit, a 9-year-old whose light reached us even from a distance. Her life reminds us of a profound truth: some children belong to a family long before they ever step through the front door.

Krystal's journey among us was brief, like a single, beautiful verse in a long poem, but the echo of her life remains.

Now, that journey has reached a place of perfect rest. While our hearts carry the heavy weight of her absence, we find peace in the knowledge that she has been gathered into the bosom of the Father. There, Krystal finally enjoys the radiant health that eluded her here—free from the constraints of the body and embraced by eternal love.

On behalf of the Boards of Trustees of Adonai's Mercy House in both the United States and the Philippines, our donors, and our staff, we extend our deepest sympathies to her mother, Kaycee, and the entire De Guzman family.

Krystal was never merely a name on a list; she was a cherished daughter of our community. Even though she did not get to enjoy the new ward as others have, a space was always reserved for her in our prayers—and that space will remain hers forever.

Perhaps, her mother, Kaycee Tagayun, knew this fact and decided to fill up this space in honor of her daughter. Kaycee has become a regular fixture during Adonai's events as a volunteer.

She said she finds comfort in knowing that there are other people who stand beside her and who understand her grief.

To Krystal we say, "rest well, our dear angel." Your story was never measured in months or hospital stays, but in the love you gave and the light you left behind. You have found your way, at last, to the brightest room of all. ■

## Suddenly, **Angel Took Wings**

Angel Anne Pahit joined the Adonai's Mercy House (AMH) family when she was at an age where she stood right on the threshold—no longer quite a child, but not yet an adult.

Most children arrive at the pediatric oncology ward of Mary Johnston Hospital in search of comfort, but Angel was different. From the moment she entered, she became the one offering it.

She possessed a natural, quiet aura that acted as a magnet for the younger children. Before long, they were trailing behind her, affectionately calling her "Ate Angel." It wasn't a title she had sought; it was simply the role she inhabited with a sisterly, effortless grace.

During one group activity, she was asked to lead the opening prayer. She didn't blink. She spoke with a clarity and a steady confidence that revealed the sharp intelligence anchoring her gentle exterior.

As the months passed, it became clear that her heart belonged to the written word. She was a regular in school writing competitions, already decorated with awards for her prose. When the AMH staff encouraged her to write for their online newsletter, Adonai's Herald, she agreed instantly.

The resulting draft was a revelation. Even at her young age, she possessed a voice that was sure of itself, avoiding the filler of youth for the precision of a true storyteller.

At the AMH Christmas party in late 2025, she approached AMH's editorial consultant, Mr. Fort Nicolas, to ask when the next writing workshop would begin.

"First quarter of next year," he told Angel. She offered a bright smile, said her thanks, and

(CONT'D. TO NEXT PAGE...)



## Angel Took Wings...

(CONT'D. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE...)

vanished back into a crowd of friends to finish the happy, mundane business of taking selfies.

Her talents, however, reached beyond the page. During an art session at the Unilab headquarters, she picked up a paintbrush and approached the canvas with the same deliberate focus she used for her sentences.

When the judges eventually named her painting the best in the room, Angel didn't react with a sense of superiority. She simply looked genuinely happy, and the entire room erupted in cheers. Her victory felt like a win for the whole community.

The holiday season came and went. As the staff began mapping out the vision for 2026, a staggering piece of news reached the office: Angel was gone.

The timeline was a cruel blur. On January 7, 2026, following routine laboratory tests, she developed a fever that turned out to be dengue. For a brief moment, her condition seemed to stabilize, but then her blood pressure crashed. Her heart—a heart that had been a source of light for so many—simply could not tolerate the strain of the medication meant to save her.

Today, the walk to her wake remains the hardest mile of the organization's work. Yet, those who knew her choose to remember her not by the suddenness of her departure, but by the lightness of her entry.

Angel Anne Pahit was like a gentle breeze—the kind that arrives unannounced, cools the air, and makes life feel a little easier for everyone in its path. Her time was heartbreakingly brief, but she spent every bit of it being exactly what her name suggested. ■

### A Flash Fiction-Based Devotional

## The Bridge of Brokenness

By Fort Nicolas

The gray morning felt heavy, the kind of damp chill that reminds one of a lonely, cold well. Lani descended the limestone steps of the chapel, her shoes clicking a rhythmic, solitary beat.

Her words still echoed in her mind when Pastor Rudy Tolentino asked her minutes earlier if she was willing to donate to a sick member of the congregation.

"My husband and son are gone. It was you who prayed for their souls when we buried them three years ago," Lani told him. "The money that I have in me is my only shield now. Each person must carry her own cross."

As she took her last step her mind was on the "survivor's chest" containing the high-yield inheritance she guarded with the bricks of her grief. She did not notice the rain-slicked moss on that last step. She slipped and Lani found herself sprawled in the wet grass, a sharp sting flowing through her hip.

After a few seconds, the physical pain gave way to embarrassment. How many people saw her fall? How awkward did she look?

"Are you broken, Lola (Grandma)?" she heard a thin voice saying. The girl was the only witness to Lani's fall.

Lani looked up to see little Edna, her face pale and wearing an undersized sweater. The former recognized her as the beneficiary of the church's fundraising effort.

Edna's trembling fingers reached into her pocket and pulled out a crumpled sticker of a yellow sun. She leaned forward and pressed it onto Lani's hand.

"My mother says when it hurts, we hold each other so we don't fall," Edna whispered.



THIS IMAGE IS AI-GENERATED.

Lani stared at the yellow sticker, a valued possession of this child whose life was flickering like a candle in the wind. Yet Edna willingly offered it to comfort an old lady in distress.

"It's not that painful, my child," Lani choked out, tears falling down her cheeks. "In fact, the fall woke me up."

She reached out for the small, cold hand of Edna. She cradled it and stared at the girl with a smile.

### Reflection

In Filipino culture, we often speak of "bayanihan," the communal spirit of moving a house together. Everyone leaves their tasks and worries behind to focus on helping a neighbor.

Sometimes we think that to help others, we must first be "whole" or

"overflowing." We wait until our own wounds are healed before we reach out to bandage another's.

Lani believed her survival depended on her solitude. She thought her "survivor's chest" of resources was her protection. Yet, it was a dying child with a simple sticker who showed her the truth: Mercy is not a transaction of the rich to the poor; it is the shared warmth of two people shivering in the same rain.

When we share despite our wants, our "brokenness" becomes the bridge that allows God's grace to cross over.

### Prayer

Lord of the weary, forgive us for the times we have turned our grief into a fortress. Soften our hearts so that we may see the "Ednas" in our lives—those who offer us the sun even while they walk through the valley of the shadow. Teach us that in holding one another, we find the strength to stand. Amen.

### The Word

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." — Galatians 6:2 ■

(FORT NICOLAS, A VETERAN MANILA JOURNALIST AND A LAY MEMBER OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES, IS THE AUTHOR OF "WISDOM IN WHISPERS." THE BOOK IS A PIONEERING WORK IN THE LITERARY DEVOTIONAL GENRE, UTILIZING FLASH FICTION AS A MEDIUM FOR REFLECTION.)

## Will you stand with the mothers of Adonai's Mercy House?

In the quiet corners of the pediatric oncology unit at Adonai's Mercy House, there is a sound that lingers long after the machines go silent. It is the steady, rhythmic hum of collective prayer of mothers watching over their children.

These women wear a "brave smile," although tears kept falling in various times of the day. They wipe them away before facing their young warriors. They know they must be pillars of strength, hiding every flicker of exhaustion so their children see only hope.

But even the strongest pillars can crack under the weight of a foe as formidable as cancer, especially when paired with the crushing burden of poverty.

They should not have to fight this battle alone. And today, they don't have to. Adonai's Mercy House is currently walking alongside 50 Filipino children who are fighting for their lives. These families have the will to fight, but they lack the resources for the medicine, nutrition, and specialized care required to win.

Will you step into the circle of prayer and action with us?

We are inviting you to become a Champion of Mercy. This isn't just a title; it is a lifeline. By becoming a stakeholder in their healing, you provide the tangible mercy these children need to see another sunrise.

Your gift today—whether it is \$5 or \$50—goes directly toward the life-saving treatments that turn "warriors" into "survivors."

The battle is fierce, but mercy is stronger. Please join us in standing behind these mothers and their children. ■



Childhood  
**CANCER**  
Awareness

## A Prayer for Childhood Cancer Awareness

Dear God, we lift up all the children battling cancer. Surround them with Your healing presence and grant them strength and peace. Bless their families with courage and hope. We pray for wisdom for doctors and researchers, that they may find cures and bring healing. May this month raise awareness and inspire compassion, bringing hope to all affected by childhood cancer. In Your name, we pray, Amen.

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- Uses BrainGym for smarter kids
- Strong focus on literacy & early numeracy
- Safe, nurturing, and engaging environment
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### OUR SUMMER PROGRAMS:

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