



June 2006, *Equipping*

## Celebration Story

We invite you to share the following story with your congregation from Daniel Pantoja, Witness worker in Philippines. It should take about 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

### The Philippines: Learning Through Listening

Daniel Pantoja, Witness Worker in the Philippines and Gordon Janzen of Mennonite Church Canada, were walking around Zamboanga city when they noticed a monument for an American military officer. While they were looking at the names of American and Filipino Christians, a group of men approached Daniel. With some anger and jealousy, they said, "That is not the real story of Zamboanga! There's a place where you should go so you can read the true story of Zamboanga."

They directed Daniel and Gordon to the place in the city hall where the true story was located on a marker. The marker narrated the Tausug resistance against the American military occupation in the last 100 years. It emphasized that the Tausug people never accepted the foreign power that colonized them. After reading this story, Daniel and Gordon went back to the group of men and apologized for not listening to their side of the story. Daniel told them that he was in the Philippines to listen to the people and to help them in telling their story to others and he told them about a commemoration planned to recognize stories of oppression like the one they had just shared.

The men gathered around, showing joy and excitement and asked who Daniel and Gordon were.

"We're Mennonites," Daniel told them.

"Mennonites?! What are Mennonites?" they asked.

So Gordon gave a short impromptu Anabaptist Christian presentation to these Tausug men in the heart of Zamboanga, a city that is accustomed to conflict and occupation.

It is amazing how people can turn from their anger to an attitude of hospitality within a few moments



*Above: Gordon Janzen gives an impromptu Anabaptist presentation to several Tausug men in Zamboanga.  
Below: Daniel Pantoja poses with a soldier, part of the visible military presence in the Philippines.*



when they see our willingness to listen. These Tausug men have been longing to be heard because their story has been suppressed. The Spirit of God led Gordon and Daniel to listen and then to go back and just say, "Yes we have heard your side of the story." In turn, the group was willing to listen to their story also. What a fun and pleasant way to be a witness to the truth of the humble Prince of Peace!