



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Volume 6 – September 23, 2011

West Timor – Smithville

Visit to Timor, May 13-20, 2011

The Indonesian island of Timor is on the other side of the world, about 16,000 kilometres from our home in Beamsville, Ontario. We spent two weeks in Timor, but travel time added almost a full week to our time away from home. Between the trips there and back, we circled the globe. Our trip to Timor ran from late Tuesday evening to Friday afternoon; our return from Monday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon. In some respects, the culture and life of the people who live there are just as far removed from our culture and life.

The difference that probably is most striking is the difference between our standard of living and theirs. Of course, just like in Canada, the people of Timor live in a wide range of circumstances. The cities are quite modern. We spent most of our time in Kupang, a city with a population of about 335,000. We stayed in a new hotel, in an air conditioned room, with Internet access and cable television, and “Western plumbing.” The streets are filled with vehicles, especially motorcycles, trucks, and 4-wheel drive SUVs. We withdrew cash, shopped at the shopping mall, and we ate at the nearby KFC outlet – though the normal order there was chicken with a side order of rice, not fries!

But about 130 kilometres away from Kupang, in the villages of Pili and Bela, we visited congregations whose members’ homes had no running water or electricity. Much of their clothing was Western clothing, which had come to them from the Australian churches, but the men and women also wore the traditional sarong, which they had woven painstakingly, each one taking weeks to complete. They live a fairly traditional life, raising potatoes, corn, and various fruits, like papaya and sirsak, to provide for their needs. I’m quite sure (hopeful?) that dog was not on the menu for any of the meals we enjoyed among these brothers and sisters, but it is something that is found in their cooking pots. When they get together for conversation, they squat for long periods of time on their haunches in a posture that most of us couldn’t hold for more than thirty seconds. They chew “siri penang,” the betel nut (pinang), together with a bite from a siri branch and some

chalky powder, which produces a red juice that stains their teeth. Ministers from Canada who venture to try this local treat may discover that chewing for the first time is something like smoking a cigarette for the first time – a little dizzying! Experienced chewers seem to show no such effects, but do enjoy greatly observing them in inexperienced practitioners.

Even in the similarities between our cultures, there were obvious differences. In Indonesia, people drive on the “wrong side” of the road, just like they do in countries like England and Australia. There is little evidence of government regulation or involvement that is so much a part of our lives here. We saw very few policemen on the streets. There are gas stations, much like ours, but also private “gas stations,” where you can buy gasoline by the bottle. Most of the people

drive fairly small motorcycles. We saw motorcycles carrying four passengers, with no helmets; we saw them carrying large loads of fruits and vegetables; we saw some carrying twenty-five or thirty live chickens, hanging upside down, with their heads just a couple of inches from the pavement. As one person said, people in Timor drive by “sonar” – a couple of “beep-beeps” on the horn lets the other guy know, “Watch out; I’m coming around this blind corner” or,

“Don’t pull out just now because I’m going to pass you.” Lane markings, wherever they might exist, mean nothing, and the motorcycles simply seem to look for any opening where they can slip by.

The hotels serve a continental breakfast, just like in North America, but the menu is chicken porridge, boiled rice, and fried rice. Rice is as common on their meal tables as bread and potatoes are on ours. People here are trying to get thinner; people there believe that you look more important if you “have a belly.” (They thought that Rev. Souman and I were very important.)

Rev. Edwer Dethan, with his wife, Femmy, and their children, Moses, Grace, and Micah, live in Noelbaki, on the outskirts of the city of Kupang. They live in the same home in which Rev. Dethan grew up. Part of the home is



occupied by Rev. Dethan's adoptive father, and they also share the premises with a number of orphans who come from the villages where mission posts or churches have been established. They attend school and help with a variety of tasks around the home.

Rev. Dethan was called by the Smithville congregation in 2003 to serve as a missionary to his homeland. He had received some theological training at the theological school operated by the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) and then completed a Master of Divinity program in Hamilton at the Theological Seminary. Apart from the development of mission posts, the focus of his work has been on training young men who will serve in those mission posts and bring the gospel to other parts of Indonesia. Besides the work that can be done on Timor, the nearby islands of Sabu and Rote are "targets" for evangelization. Ideally, the Lord willing, this work will be done together with the churches of the GGRI and the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC).

In Indonesian the plural is indicated by the repetition of a noun - so, gereja gereja means churches. While the GGRC and the GGRI are in many ways so similar as to be identical (Confessions, Church Order, song book, etc.), because of their history, the churches of the GGRI are mainly found on the island of Sumba, and the churches of the GGRC on the island of Timor.

To equip young men to bring the gospel in Indonesia, a Reformed Training Centre has been established and is housed in buildings not far from Rev. Dethan's home. There are several classrooms, a library, and a chapel is under construction. As part of the requirements for the certification of the Training Centre, the government ordered that the school have a substantial library. That requirement has turned out to be a blessing for the school. There are currently about eighty students at the school, more or less equally divided between theological students, and young people who are in training to become teachers. Most of the students are able to read English, though they do not readily speak it. Local ministers as well as some men who have theological training serve as instructors. While we were there, I had the privilege of delivering four lectures, on the book of Job.

Three mission posts, in Barate, Bone Ana and Pili, and two instituted churches, in Dalam Tuak and Bela, have been established. The Dalam Tuak church is close to the Dethans' home and the Training Centre. We worshipped there one Sunday. We also had the joy of travelling to the mission post in Pili one weekend and to the other instituted church, in Bela. In these situations, we certainly felt the distance between us and our brothers and sisters in Timor, because of the language barrier and because they live in fairly primitive and poor conditions. They have very little by way of material possessions and, as mentioned above, their lives are very

simple. It's hard for us to imagine living the way they do. One night, we slept in a tent in Pili and the Dethans reassured us that we didn't have to worry, because the villagers would stay awake, keeping watch. Of course, we wanted to know what we might be worried about – and they said, Headhunters! Needless to say that when a dog started barking close to our tent at about 1:30 that morning, we were instantly wide awake, and remained so for the rest of the night.

Yet, they seemed content, and we recognized our unity with them in faith, especially when we had the opportunity to worship with them. Both in Pili and in Bela, we received a warm welcome and enjoyed generous hospitality. The people are gentle and humble. They are very thankful for the work that is being done, to establish faithful churches. They face opposition and not, as we might expect, primarily from the government of this Muslim nation, or from their pagan neighbours, but from the liberal Reformed church. In Pili, one family was locked inside their home and the home was set on fire by members of the liberal Reformed church! Thankfully, the family was able to get out of the house, but the incident



shows us what the atmosphere is like for them. Sunday evening after the worship services in Pili, there was an open meeting and quite a few visitors were there, including the man who owned a great deal of the land in the area. He had walked five kilometres to see for himself what was going on and he asked several questions during the meeting. He was pleased with the answers he received and endorsed the work, encouraging people of the area to join the church. The elders in Pili

also have plans to open a second mission post in the area.

There is a great deal more that we could tell, about driving on the river bed, eating barbecued pork in Baun, the taste of sirsak and sambal, the wonderful conversations with Br. and Sr. Dethan, the enthusiasm and interest of the students in the training centre, the fellowship with brothers of the GGRC, and the physical beauty of the island. We had a wonderful time in Timor and it was very encouraging to be able to see and experience something of the worldwide work of the Lord Jesus Christ, something of the unity that we have in him with people who live on the other side of the world, in a very different culture. We got to know and understand more of the situation of the Reformed churches in Timor. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the work that Rev. Dethan is doing and that in time we will see further evidence of Christ's unifying work in the development of a sister church relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the GGRC, so that the churches being established through the work of Rev. Dethan and the churches of the GGRI and the GGRC may live and work together more closely, even within the bonds of one federation.

Rev. D. Wynia

Reformed Churches' Bible College PNG

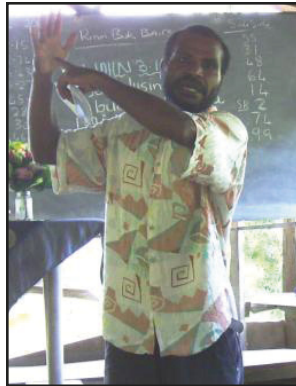


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CHILDREN 'S BIBLE SCHOOL

Well done to the Certificate students who ran three successful Children 's Bible School programs over the resurrection weekend.

And thank you to the Diploma students who assisted where necessary, as well as to those who held devotions in various places over the weekend. Three day children 's programs were held in East Boroko, Nine Mile and Veifa 'a. In spite of the rain in some places over 30 children came to each one and the programs were, by all accounts, enjoyed by all.



Edwin telling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection

' PLES BILONG MI ' EVENING

In what is fast becoming an annual event, students and staff of the Reformed Churches Bible College gathered on Friday 6th May to celebrate their place of origin.



The 'West Papuans' singing a song

Whether that be West Papua, Chimbu province, Mekeo, Australia, New Zealand or another place, we all contributed some food and an item to share with others on this special evening.

Having many people of different cultures brings its own challenges and it is beneficial for us all to appreciate and celebrate each others ' differences.



The Children's Bible School Program in Nine Mile Church.



The children prepared an item for the evening...



Greg comes to us from Lae. Although he came somewhat late, he has already joined in with many of the activities at the Bible College including the Children's Program. He has finished his Grade 12 education and hopes to go to University in the future.

Introducing ...

Esther is a member of East Boroko Church Group. She is a sister of Aisi (one of the Diploma Students) and assists in the running of the Sunday School program in East Boroko.



from the principal ...

The second teaching block for 2011 has been a very busy time for students and staff. A quick look at this newsletter will clearly show this. The students are to be commended for their work in holding the Children's Bible schools and sharing devotions over the Resurrection Weekend. Well done students. It's wonderful to see you sharing your gifts in the local churches.

By all accounts you enjoyed it too. That too is good. There is much joy to be found in the work of ministry. Hopefully you tasted that as you looked at children's faces listening to every word you said as you told a Bible Story. Maybe you were lifted up by the enthusiasm of the children's singing. Perhaps you received a thankful comment from a person who was encouraged by your devotion. These are ways that God encourages you as you serve His church. Enjoy those moments and may they encourage you to continue in works of service.

Wayne van der Heide



The Board of Governors:

Clockwise from left: Br. J Lanta (CAG—Lae), Br. Paul Ame (CAG—Veifa'a), Rev. H Versteeg (MBR—Toronto), Rev. Alan Douma (sitting in), Br. W van der Heide (Principal—ex-officio),

Br. Ben Marjen (CAG—Nine Mile), Rev I. Wildeboer (MBR—Australia).
Absent: Br. W. Hagoort (MBR—New Zealand), Br F. Aoae (CAG—Veifa'a).

CAG=Council appointed Governor; MBR=Mission Board Representative

Contact Details

Reformed Churches' Bible College
PO Box 590
Waigani, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Principal: tripela31@yahoo.com

Praise God for the successful Children's Bible School programs that could be run. Pray for the students as they continue to go out into the churches and community, holding devotions, running catechism classes and Bible Studies.

Pray for a good break for the staff and students(16th May - 6th June). Everyone is very tired and many have struggled with illness.

Prayer Points

Praise God for the Board of Governors meeting that was held this past week. Pray for wisdom for the Board of Governors as they make decisions for the running and future of the Bible College

Teaching Marketing Skills

We would like to say a big thank to the ladies from Nine Mile who came to share their cooking skills with the students. The little kitchen was crowded as all the students gathered to watch the making of panadas and rice balls. Learning how to make and market various items will be useful, also for future pastors and their wives to help support themselves.

