



MISSION NEWS

Mission Activities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

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THE WELL-MEANT OFFER OF THE GOSPEL (PART 1)

Guest Editorial

Wes Bredenhof

It was a Sunday in 1984. The place was the city I now live: Launceston. Rev. Charles Rodman was preaching at the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He chose as his text Galatians 4:4-5. The theme for his sermon was “Christ is our example to all men.” In this sermon, Rev. Rodman proclaimed that in his human nature, Christ showed love to all, and in doing this, he fulfilled the law of God. Thus, Christ is our example. Just as he loved all people, we are to likewise love all people.

Afterwards, Rev. Rodman faced objections to his sermon from three of his elders. They said the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches in chapter 8, article 7 that Christ acts in both natures together. He has two natures, human and divine. These two natures cannot be separated. They must always be considered together. Therefore, if Christ showed love to all, he did so not only in his human nature, but also in his divine nature. The necessary conclusion of Rev. Rodman’s sermon was that God showed love to all men. The elders found that conclusion to be unacceptable.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church had been faced with the question of the well-meant offer of the gospel some years before. It was in the context of ecumenical relations. They were moving closer towards the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. But then it was discovered that the PCEA had people who believed that God has a love for all people, including the reprobate. In the PCEA were ministers and members who believed that God desires the salvation of all people. That teaching led the two churches to go their separate ways.

Now the same view appeared to be coming from an Evangelical Presbyterian pastor. It created a division in the EPC. In June of 1986, Rev. Rodman and one



other pastor left the EPC. They took a number of others with them and established what became known as the Southern Presbyterian Church.

It's a sad story that's taken place all over the world. In Scotland, there was the Marrow Controversy in the early 1700s. This revolved around a book published in the 1640s, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. It proclaimed the grace of God and the well-meant offer of the gospel. It became controversial in Scotland and in 1720 the Church of Scotland prohibited ministers from recommending it or saying anything good about it.

It also became a matter of debate in the United States in the twentieth century. In the Christian Reformed Church it came up with Rev. Herman Hoeksema (1886-1965). A Christian Reformed synod issued a statement in 1924 affirming the well-meant offer of the gospel. Rev. Hoeksema took issue with that and it led to the establishment of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church it came up with philosopher Gordon Clark (1902-1985). Like Hoeksema, Clark was critical of the well-meant offer of the gospel. This was partly what led him to leave the OPC.

It's a topic that comes up with regularity even today, especially on mission fields where Christians from other backgrounds discover the Reformed faith for the first time. For example, I've encountered it in Brazil and the Philippines. But it's an issue that also has relevance for those eager to share the gospel in their own backyard and who want to do it in a biblical and theologically responsible way.

Let's first define the issue more carefully. This question is one you'll only find in the context of Reformed theology.ⁱ That's because this has to do with our doctrine of election and reprobation. Election means that, before the creation of the world, out of his gracious good pleasure, God chose some to salvation, but passed by others. There are elect people and there are reprobates. This is because of God's eternal decree of predestination. But how does God's eternal decree relate

to the offer of the gospel? All Reformed people will agree that God has a gracious disposition towards the elect. When he offers the gospel to them, he truly means what he says and brings them to salvation. But what about the reprobate? When God sends people to bring the gospel to the reprobate, is the offer of the gospel genuine? Can we say that God is also graciously disposed towards the reprobate? Does he genuinely desire their salvation and does he want them to hear that? Is the gospel offer well-meant to the reprobate as well as to the elect? Those aren't easy questions.

The Practical Significance of the Issue

Some have said that your position on this issue will make a big difference in how you view the necessity of evangelism. This isn't necessarily true. For example, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America have their missionaries and evangelism programs. They also insist the gospel must be spread everywhere, even though they reject the well-meant offer of the gospel.

The main way this issue will matter is in how you communicate the gospel. If you reject the well-meant offer of the gospel, your message cannot have anything about God's grace or love to the person with whom you're speaking. After all, that person could be reprobate and God has no gracious disposition towards the reprobate -- and we have to speak the truth. We also cannot say anything about God's desire or intention for that person. That's because, again, that person could be reprobate and it could have been God's desire to pass that person by and leave him or her condemned to hell. We would not want to say one thing about God's desire or will while the reality is different. You can't say to an unbeliever, "God wants you to be saved from your sins," because perhaps God doesn't. It may be that God's will is that this person be hardened in sin and suffer his eternal wrath.

The Teaching of Scripture

Does the Bible teach that God desires the salvation of all people? Does the Bible teach that it pleases God that



the wicked repent and believe? Does Scripture teach a well-meant offer of the gospel to all?

Here I'm going to refer to a helpful report mainly written by Professor John Murray (1898-1975). As I mentioned earlier, the well-meant offer of the gospel became an issue in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church because of Gordon Clark. A committee was appointed to study the question and that committee presented a report to the General Assembly of the OPC in 1948. John Murray was the main author of that report. I think his work is excellent on this and therefore I'm going to summarize it for you.

Let's begin with Matthew 5:44-48. It's true that this passage doesn't speak directly to the question of the well-meant offer of the gospel. However, it does tell us something about God's kindness and generosity that impacts upon all the ways he shows his grace. This passage implies that God loves his enemies and because he loves them he sends them the gifts of sun and rain. Even towards the unjust, God takes a stand where he shows a form of love, kindness, and mercy. You could also think of parallel in Luke 6. In Luke 6:35-36, Jesus explicitly says that God is "kind to the ungrateful and the evil." Further, we are to be merciful, just as our Father is merciful.

Acts 14:17 speaks in the same way. God did good to the unbelieving people of Lystra by sending them rain, by

giving them food, and by filling their hearts with joy. There we see more evidence of divine goodness and lovingkindness towards unbelievers.

In Deuteronomy 5:29 God expresses his wish or desire that his people would always fear and obey him. Yet the people didn't. That illustrates a distinction between what God expresses as his wish or desire and what he has decreed in his secret counsel. In theology, we speak about a distinction between the perceptive will of God and the decretive will of God. There are other passages where the same thing is seen: Deut. 32:39, Psalm 81:13ff., and Isaiah 48:18. In each of these places, God reveals himself as desiring the fulfilment of something which he hasn't actually decreed will happen.

Next we turn to the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Some interpret these words only in view of Christ's humanity. As if in his human nature he desired one thing, while in his divine nature he desired and decreed another. Then, further, his human nature didn't have access to the knowledge his divine nature possessed. But Jesus was speaking here as the Messiah and Saviour, as the God-man. He was speaking of himself as the Messiah and Saviour who had the will to embrace the people of Jerusalem in his saving grace. What we have



“There’s mystery here in how these things run together. But our calling isn’t to fully understand God and how he operates. Our calling is to follow what the Bible teaches, even when we confront mysteries beyond our comprehension. “

here is a revelation of the divine will as well as of the human. Remember: Jesus said in John 12:49-50 and other passages that there’s a perfect harmony between the will of the Father and the will of the Son.

Then there are the classic passages of Ezekiel 18:23,32 and 33:11 about God not desiring the death of the wicked. Some argue that these words only apply to a special class of wicked people, such as elect wicked people. However, we should note that these verses themselves don’t make any limitations or qualifications. There isn’t even a hint of that there or in the immediate context. According to John Murray, there are two things that we can conclude from these verses:

First: “It is absolutely and universally true that God does not delight in or desire the death of a wicked person.”

Second: “It is likewise absolutely and universally true that he delights in the repentance and life of that wicked person.”

Here in Ezekiel, the Holy Spirit was not speaking of God’s decree, his decretive will. When it comes to God’s eternal decree of predestination, we have to say that God absolutely decrees the eternal death of some wicked and it pleases him to do that. Yet in Ezekiel, this is speaking about the will of God’s lovingkindness, his preceptive will. His eternal decree of predestination isn’t in view at all and it would be wrong to impose it on the passage.

Isaiah 45:22a is our next passage: “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!” This text is addressed to “the ends of the earth,” to the nations. It says at the beginning of the verse, “Turn to me and be saved...” This is both a command and an invitation. It is the will of God that all should turn to him and be saved. Again, that is his preceptive will. To us it might seem that God’s preceptive and decretive wills cancel each other out or contradict each other. There’s mystery here in how these things run together. But our calling isn’t to fully understand God and how he operates. Our calling is to follow what the Bible teaches, even when we confront mysteries beyond our comprehension.

The last passage to look at is 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” This text speaks of the long-suffering of God, his patience. Elsewhere in the Bible, God’s patience is connected with his goodness (e.g. Romans 2:4). God is patient because he is good.

But then we get to the question of who is being referred to when Peter writes that God is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance”? Who is the “any” and the “all”? Does it literally mean all people, both elect and reprobate? In his commentary on 2 Peter 3:9, John Calvin wrote, “So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would



“To every unbeliever who hears the gospel, God sincerely offers Christ in all the glory of his person and in all the perfection of his finished work.”

have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost.” In the next paragraph, Calvin writes that God’s hidden purpose or decree is not in view here, “but only of his will as made known to us in the gospel. For God there stretches forth his hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of” the elect.

John Murray followed Calvin’s interpretation, as do I. He argues that this cannot be restricted to the elect. It would be unnatural and unexpected to understand Peter as saying that God does not desire that any elect believers would perish. After all, believers are those who have already repented, been given eternal life, and saved from destruction. For believers there is still a daily struggle with sin, but the language of this verse and its context “most naturally refers to mankind as a whole as men are faced with the issues of death or life before the day of judgment comes.” So again, what we encounter here is the preceptive will of God. This is what God desires as distinct from what God has eternally decreed.

At the conclusion of his report for the OPC, John Murray gives these five conclusions from his study of the Scriptures:

In his ordinary providence, God demonstrates his grace and kindness, even his love, to the ungodly.

God expresses an eager desire for the fulfilment of certain things which he has not decreed will pass. This is mysterious and inscrutable.

Christ himself provides an example of this in his earthly ministry. This is referring to his weeping over Jerusalem.

God has a merciful lovingkindness towards the repentance and salvation of even those who are not elect.

We must conclude finally that “the full and free offer of the gospel is a grace bestowed upon all.” This grace comes from the heart of God. To every unbeliever who hears the gospel, God sincerely offers Christ in all the glory of his person and in all the perfection of his finished work.

So, what happened with Murray’s report in the OPC? Along with a minority report arguing against the free offer of the gospel, it was sent to the presbyteries and sessions of the OPC for their “earnest study.” Neither report was adopted in any official way. There remains freedom of conscience on this issue in the OPC.

In the second instalment, we’ll look at what the Reformed confessions teach on this point, and then also take a closer look at those who reject the well-meant offer and how we should regard them.

CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

Southern River Mission Board

Frank Janssen



At the end of last year, brother Lionel t'Hart became an elder in West Albany, and as such resigned from the board. We thank Lionel for his long dedication to the board, especially with the work that he was blessed to do with the Tulait magazine. Lionel has been crucial to this work, and we will miss him very much in this role. Thank you, Lionel! We do welcome to the Board two new members from West Albany, namely Benn Hordyk and Carl Plug. They now start the 3-year familiarisation program □ to get them up to speed with all the workings of the Mission Board, Supporting and Cooperating Churches, the work on the field and the work done by Canada and New Zealand as well.

The latest Tulait Magazine has been printed and has been used at a few outreaches. A very big thank you to the youth of the co-operating and supporting churches, who each year continue to raise funds for the magazine. The current topic is 'Addictions.' This magazine has been a huge blessing for the mission work, and the plan is to continue to publish more magazines in the future. A daily devotional has also been completed and is about to be printed and distributed to the members of the churches in PNG. Literature is sparse in PNG, so it will be a blessing for the members to have a daily devotional to use. May God continue to bless the Tulait Magazine in PNG! Copies of the magazines can be found here: <https://www.frcmissionpng.org/tulait>

The board gets the opportunity at the end of April to meet with the Co-Operating and Supporting Churches to give its formal update. At this meeting, the Sending Church also presents the budget and working plan for approval from the Co-operating churches. We are very thankful for the support of the churches in

Australia, it truly is a blessing not only to have this financial support for the work but also the congregational prayers for the work. May the work of Mission be a focus in each and every family.

In the next few months, the Lord Willing, the board will be able to invite you all to a presentation from br. Mark Mulder about the churches in Port Moresby. I hope this

is of great interest to you all, especially as we take on the holistic approach and that we are currently searching for a Missionary for this work. Pastor Ryan will also be taking a short furlough in Western Australia, he too will be hosting a few presentations to give an update on the work and the many changes that have occurred in the past 3 years. Please see the advert on the page adjacent for more details.

Prayer points:

- For the national Pastors and the congregations, so that every Sunday God's word can be declared and that many more people in PNG may come to hear God's word.
- That God will allow Pastor Ryan and his family to come to WA for furlough and for both Pastor Ryan and Br Mark Mulder as they prepare for their presentations.
- For the work of the Tuilat Magazine as a tool for the Mission work in PNG.
- For the workers earnestly and constantly that God's word can be spread to the many who haven't heard the Gospel in PNG.
- That God will guide the work so that a call can be made for a missionary in POM and the harvest that needs to be attended to can be.



On behalf of
**THE FREE REFORMED CHURCH
OF SOUTHERN RIVER
MISSION BOARD**

you are invited along to a number of presentations by br. Mark Mulder and Pastor Ryan deJonge as they spend some furlough time in Australia, the Lord willing.

**MISSION PRESENTATION:
"WHAT'S NEW?"**

Pastor Ryan deJonge, Missionary in North-East PNG for the Free Reformed Church of Southern River

There has been a lot of change for the mission work in PNG in the last two years: a new sending church, a new PNG home for our work, a new missionary, a new congregation in Hila, and more! What hasn't changed is our calling to preach the good news of Jesus Christ and to build up His church in PNG. Come and listen to Pastor Ryan deJonge speak about how we are carrying out our unchanging mission in a much-changed situation. The presentations will feature updates on all the exciting new things that are happening, pictures, maps, and stats to get you oriented, a specially made short video on the new church plant in Hila, and lots of opportunities to ask questions and interact with Pastor Ryan. Make sure you don't miss it!

Pastor Ryan will be doing the same presentation in each church; everyone is welcome to attend any of these events

9 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of Southern River at 7:30pm

15 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of Bunbury & Busselton (SW-JCCC) at 7:30pm

16 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of Armadale at 7:30pm

23 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of Byford at 7:30pm

27 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of West Albany at 7:30pm

30 JUNE 2022

Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs at 7:30pm

**MISSION PRESENTATION:
PORT MORESBY CHURCHES**

Br. Mark Mulder, Principal of the Reformed Churches Bible College in Port Moresby, PNG

12 MAY 2022

Free Reformed Church of Albany at 7:30pm

19 MAY 2022

Free Reformed Church of Southern River at 7:30pm

**MISSION PRESENTATIONS
AT THE SCHOOLS**

Pastor Ryan deJonge

13 JUNE 2022

Kelmiscott John Calvin School

15 JUNE 2022

South West John Calvin Christian College

17 JUNE 2022

John Calvin Christian College

20 JUNE 2022

Byford John Calvin School

28 JUNE 2022

Albany John Calvin School



MISSION PNG YOUTH EVENT

A youth only event is also planned for the 1st July 2022 with br. Mark Mulder, br. Ben vandeKamp and Pastor Ryan deJonge. More information on this will be distributed by the Southern River Youth.

HOW TO PLANT A CHURCH (VII)

BUILDING UP THE CONGREGATION

Southern River Mission Board

Pastor Ryan De Jonge , Lae PNG

What is necessary for a church plant to become a strong, independent church? The answer to this question is what we will look at as we examine the sixth step of the Pauline Cycle, Building Up the Congregation. This step divides into six parts: instruction, worship, service, witness, fellowship, and stewardship.

Instruction is a very important part of what makes a church strong. We can be thankful that we have been handed a strong and vibrant tradition of catechism teaching, both in the second service on Sunday and in the weekly training that happens for young adults and new believers in catechism classes. This strong tradition reflects the strong emphasis of God's Word on instruction, as can be seen in such passages as Deut 6:4-9, Rom 15:4, Acts 2:42, 2 Tim 3:14-17, and many others.

When we think of instruction, we often think of catechism teaching that is done by the minister, perhaps with the help of one or two elders. But as the above passages make clear, this is to be a project of the whole congregation. Parents are to teach their children and the whole congregation is to continually learn from the Word of God in a multitude of ways.

It is good to consider that the context of a church plant may require extra teaching on a certain subject. In PNG, for example, we have found we need to



“The picture of a healthy church that Acts 4:32-37 gives us is one where the members genuinely love and care for each other. This may seem obvious, but it frequently bumps up against strongly held cultural values.”



give extra attention to marriage because there are many unbiblical beliefs and assumptions about marriage even among Christians. In this regard, it would be good for every minister and consistory to reflect on the question of what extra teaching might be useful in their own context.

Worship is the second matter in building up the congregation. While aspects of this were covered in step five, the emphasis there was on the practical. Here the emphasis is on the spiritual. Is the church plant growing in their love for the gospel and for gathering for worship? Lord's Day 38's teaching on the fourth commandment is very helpful here, as it breaks down for us what is involved with heartfelt obedience to God's command to worship. Does the congregation love the ministry of the Word? Do the attendees/members diligently attend church, appreciate the sacraments, faithfully pray, and give generously?

The third aspect of a strong church is the inevitable outworking of worship, which is service. A strong and vibrant church will not only boldly talk the talk but will also humbly and cheerfully walk the walk. This service should be manifested both internally and externally. The picture of a healthy church that Acts 4:32-37 gives us is one where the members genuinely love and care for each other. This may seem obvious, but it frequently bumps up against strongly held cultural values. In PNG, believers' default setting is the wantok system, which teaches that they are only responsible for family members, not other members of the church. In Western culture, believers' default setting is individualism, which teaches that they are only responsible for themselves. A strong church is one where the members adopt Christ's values and care for each other.

But the church does not only exist for the benefit of its own members. As Christians, we are the salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13-16). We are to do good to all people (Gal 6:10). I once listened to a mission presentation where the speaker asked this challenging and illustrative question: "If a helicopter were to pick up your church with all the people in it while you were worshipping on

Sunday, would your community notice? Would they miss you and all the beneficial things that you do for them?" Reflecting on this question will help us gauge our level of service to our community.

Fourth, and again closely linked to the previous part, is witness. Perhaps the most well-known passage that speaks about witness is Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Witnessing is also a major theme in the Gospel of John and while there is not room to examine it all here, it makes for a fascinating study. What the word witness communicates well is that the church is called not only to reach out with love and good deeds but also with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A witness tells others what he has seen and experienced. As we have seen and experienced Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we are to testify about him to others so that they might know him too.

The fifth component of a strong and healthy church is fellowship. This component is closely connected with worship and service but warrants its own place. A church should be thick. It should be characterized by strong relationships, lives that are confusingly intertwined, and people that are happily interdependent upon one another. "No man is an island" applies well to Christians.

But we do need to be careful here. A church can be thick with many strong relationships and yet lack true fellowship. Family relationships, cultural sameness, and shared interests and passions can all give the illusion of fellowship, but true fellowship is rooted in and strengthened by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when seeking to strengthen fellowship, we should always do so in relation to Christ and his Word and Spirit. Thus the fellowship that makes a church strong will be built around Bible study, prayer, relationships that put Christ first, encouragement in faith, biblical rebuke and correction, and accountability. It has been amazing to see the church plant in Hila grow in this area during the past year. Almost everyone who attends church lives within 1

“If a congregation is going to thrive, then the members will need to be generous with their financial gifts.”

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km of everyone else and they are tied together by many familial connections. But now that they have come together as a congregation, they interact with each other on a whole new level, a spiritual level, and their relationships are becoming noticeably stronger and deeper as a result.

The last part of building up the congregation is building up their sense of and capacity for stewardship. Once again, we see how interrelated all of these parts are, as stewardship requires teaching, is a part of worship, is essential for service, etc. Exercising good stewardship means that the congregation is using their blessings, gifts, and talents well for the glory of God. Of course, a big part of stewardship concerns finances. If a congregation is going to thrive, then the members will need to be generous with their financial gifts. At the same time, the congregation will need to make sure they look after the offerings and church finances well or else they will discourage generous giving among the members. This is something that the Lae congregation does well, but that the Wantun congregation really struggles with and as long as they struggle with giving and looking after the church's money well, it will be hard for them to take a significant step toward institution.

To recap, we can measure a congregation's health by these six components: instruction, worship, service, witness, fellowship, and stewardship. There are certainly other important considerations, one of which is leadership capacity, which will be covered in the next step. But by taking stock of these six components we will have a fairly good understanding of a congregation's health. As these areas become progressively stronger, we can expect that the congregation is growing closer to institution.



MISSION INDONESIA

FRC Rockingham

Eric de Haan

Dear readers,

News from the Mission posts in Indonesia continues to be slow in trickling in. No detailed reports have been received lately which we can share with you. This does not mean that we hear nothing, but most correspondence has been by email and usually directly from the evangelists themselves and not through the sending churches. GGRI Kataka has recently announced that rev Balla Rihi will be undertaking a full tour of the mission posts in Sumba, Bali and Java and will provide a detailed report for their consideration, which we hope to share with you in due time. Of particular interest is the situation in Dampit and Malang (Java). There have been a few setbacks in Dampit of late, particularly as there has been difficulty in getting an evangelist to commit to this post. The first brother selected by Kataka did not receive approval from his family to move to Java, the second evangelist has had to relinquish his role due to personal circumstances, and we are prayerfully hoping that the third proposed evangelist will soon be able to take up his task. Consistory has decided to appoint a married man for this role, in the hope that this will add some stability within the work and family life of an evangelist working in this somewhat remote location.



Recent worship service in Malang Java

Things are also fairly quiet at Malang where Rev Yanto Muriwali is serving. They are still severely restricted in the numbers they can accommodate in the worship services due to Covid restrictions.

They regularly have a core group of around 7 attendees, which is all that the current rules allow. In addition to his regular work in Malang, Rev Yanto also founded a foundation called “GKKR, loosely translated as Reformed Christian Revival Movement” This work involves regular radio broadcasts and also holding teaching seminars (when covid rules permit).

La Au (Paditarana)

Positive and joyful news has been received from the mission post at LaAu regarding continued growth in the congregation and in the faith lives of believers. Rev Arison recently presided over the public profession of faith of a 19 year old youth named Jeki Kalikit Nggaba. He was a baptised member of the congregation.

The newest member of the congregation, a child named Desmon Ndamu Namu (2 Months Old) also received the covenant sign of God’s faithfulness when his parents presented him to receive baptism in the same service. By all accounts things are going well at this mission post, and we were encouraged to receive a request for support to purchase more chairs recently. Now that the church building has been completed, there is much less reluctance for the locals to attend worship services, which were formerly held in the home of the minister.



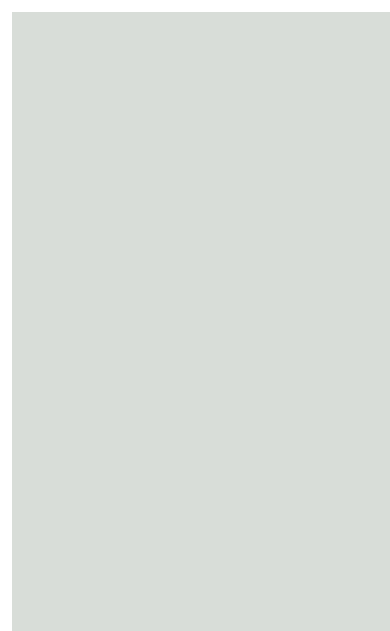
Baptism of Desmon Ndamu Namu



Jeki professing his faith



Receiving the blessing



“Now that the church building has been completed, there is much less reluctance for the locals to attend worship services, which were formerly held in the home of the minister.”

Building Projects:

As mentioned last time, there has been a flurry of activity in and around the mission posts relating to new construction work. Support for the church building projects is done through Mission Aid Rockingham. Regular and ongoing needs such as providing a manse, transport and stipend is supported through the Mission Budget. They say a picture is worth a thousand words so please enjoy the following 8000 word essay (surprised I don't have RSI!)

Lai Wunga: (Kataka) Work on the new church building foundations at Lai Wunga began in August last year. As this village is in a very isolated location at the bottom of a large valley, getting materials to the site is a difficult process. Only recently was this area connected by “road”. This is basically a track wide enough for a single motorcycle which is completely impassable during the wet months of the year! The congregation has been willing to take time off from their regular work and pitch in with the necessary work in order to reduce the labour costs of the building.

We received this explanation for the work from Evangelist Djems

“Good evening brothers,

This is the work being done on the foundation last month. This month I have not yet made any new photos of the work being done on the church at Lainwunga. We need to inform you that at the moment it is very difficult to get materials from the shop, or to get sand and rocks right to the location of the building. Because of this the congregation needs to carry all the material, sand and rocks from the location of the truck as it can't descend down to the location of the building. Also the cost of transport to get the material by truck from the shop to LaiWunga has also gone up a lot because the roads are in poor shape with lots of holes.”



Recent worship service in Malang Java

Laindeha – (Kataka): Work on the new church building at Laindeha has been going “gangbusters” This may be due in part to the very persuasive nature of Rev Balla Rihi, in getting everyone possible involved. He even managed to get Rev Pila to lend a handJ. With work starting in November 2021, good progress has been made with the walls now completed and I expect that by now the roof timbers have been installed. For all you in the building industry, a timeline of pictures [on the page adjacent] shows how an Earthquake resistant church building is constructed in Sumba!

Other News:

Outlying areas are slowly emerging from the ruinous effects of cyclone Seroja. Requests for support for replacing buildings are still coming in, with a recent request for a new Kataka manse to be built being a priority. Evangelist Adrianus is to be called as their minister, and had been living in the old church building together with his wife and family. The cyclone severely damaged the old church building which partially collapsed, leaving with the family living in perilous conditions with no shelter from the wind and rain. Support for a new manse has been provided through funds collected for the cyclone appeal Another consequence of the cyclone is that many members have lost their means of income due to damaged infrastructure in fields and dams. As a result, there is considerable strain on the deacon’s resources, and they have been unable to provide necessary funding for medical and hospital expenses. They have recently asked to re-instate the deacons to deacons support, and financial support approximating Aud \$5K was given recently for 2 members needing lifesaving operations.

Please continue to keep out Indonesian brothers and sisters in your prayers, they have been through much recently, but continue to remain steadfast in their resolve to serve the LORD, and their desire to reach out to their neighbours with the Gospel of Grace. They are very appreciative of the prayerful and physical support they receive from us in Australia. This recently received from GGRI Kataka “ Once again thank-you very much for your ongoing support, and may our God King of the church continue to bless our brothers and sisters in Australia”

Till next time .

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“For all you in the building industry, a timeline of pictures [adjacent page] shows how an Earthquake resistant church building is constructed in Sumba!”



Making the roof trusses



Rev Pila “adjusting” the cornerstone

Inspecting bricks for the foundation



Foundation nearing completion



Ready for walls



Brickwork completed



Installing the roof beam and supporting concrete cross beam



CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Guest Article

Isabel Postmus-Pakereng

COVID in Sumba and the Reformend SHS

The Covid situation in Indonesia has affected the running of schools in Sumba (and Indonesia and throughout the world) over the past two years or so. However, by the grace of God, Covid and Covid-related illness, has not severely affected the health and lives of the members of the Reformed Churches in Sumba. Families in Sumba often live in larger inter-generational family groups, with grandparents often living with children and grandchildren. There are no nursing homes in Sumba, and very few nursing homes throughout Indonesia. Households in Sumba often consist of between 7-12 people living together.

To help reduce the spread of Covid through the wider community, over the past two years, many schools in Sumba have done some of the following strategies to reduce student contact at school:

- reduced student in-school contact hours from about 6 hours down to 3 hours per day;
- run classes with students attending school only 2-3 days per week instead of 6 days per week;
- run with half classes of students, separated by 1.5 metres between student desks;
- managed student learning via at-home tasks, assignments and use of internet for information;
- referred students to sites on the internet, You-Tube and Google educational videos for content;
- made and sent lesson videos to students via WhatsApp, with teachers presenting content;

- delivered content via Power-Point presentations, sent via WhatsApp;
- conducted school lessons on-line via Google-Meet and Zoom and virtual classrooms.

During the year 2020, in the second half of the 'Alpha Wave' of Covid in Sumba, from around mid 2020 onwards, the Reformed Senior High School went into semi-shut-down mode. Students were all advised to obtain or organize or borrow use of a mobile phone, and to live in an area or location where they could get an internet connection. Students were called to attend school for a few days every month, to submit tasks and assignments and receive instruction for the next package of lessons. About 30 percent of the students had to live outside of their own home, with other families, because there was no mobile phone and no internet connection in their home area.

During this time, from July 2020 onwards, the IndiHome telecommunications company began to establish and expand a network of internet towers and landline cable connections in Sumba, starting from Waingapu city and other key cities, and expanding outwards. This enabled more and more people and students to start working on-line. It has pushed the Sumba community into greater 'internet awareness' and usage, with some good and some not-so-good side-effects! The IndiHome company continues to expand services in Sumba now.

In the year 2021, from about May onwards, Sumba faced the 'Delta wave' of Covid. The level of spread, illness and Covid hospital admissions went up very high in Sumba, and many schools had to close completely for some time. Students learned to receive schoolwork and tasks and content on-line, and to send tasks on-line and via WhatsApp, through sending

“With thanks to the Lord, all of our staff eventually recovered, although it took up to a month or more for some people.”

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Children of Light, Year 12

attached Word documents or photos of schoolwork via WhatsApp, back to their teachers. During the time when students were away, some of the teachers and staff at the Reformed SHS fell sick with Covid, between August and November 2021. With thanks to the Lord, all of our staff eventually recovered, although it took up to a month or more for some people.

All of the students at the Reformed SHS have been offered or participated in a two-stage vaccination program with the Sinovac vaccine over late 2021 and early 2022. Now, we are currently dealing with the ‘Omicron wave’ of Covid in Sumba, which started about mid-January 2022. However, in light of the reduced virulence of the Omicron variant of Covid, the school did not close down at the end of January.

Then, in February 2022, there was one student from the Reformed SHS who was exposed to Covid-19. She was picked up by her father to obtain her second Covid vaccine. The students were first checked by medical officers before being vaccinated. It was found that she (the student from the Reformed SHS) had been exposed to Covid-19. In turn, this affected the activities at the school, as the student was living in a boarding home situation. No students were permitted to return home to their home villages but had to wait for medical staff to check the health of everyone at the location of the Reformed SHS. Two weeks later, after thorough medical checks over a week, and waiting for some test results, everyone at the school was cleared.

Currently, all activities at the school are running as usual. The student who was exposed to Covid has returned and is attending school as normal. Most students are not really ‘afraid’ of the threat of Covid, because they are young and healthy, and the risk for severe illness is low. It is simply our

responsibility and obligation to meet health standards and education directives, and comply with applicable government regulations, to help reduce the spread of Covid.

We are thankful to the Lord for His preservation and care during this pandemic. The boarding home supervisors are aware of the need for healthy food, lots of vegetables, and plenty of daytime sunlight for the students, to improve Vitamin D levels and function of the immune system. We trust that God will continue to guard and protect us through this time, as we head towards Covid becoming endemic.

For your additional information:

- There are currently 77 students enrolled in the Reformed SHS.
- The school year will finish in May-June 2022, DV
- The school employs nine permanent full-time teachers and seven part time teachers
- Teachers wages total Rp. 26,000,000 – Rp. 28,000,000 per month (approx. \$2600 – \$2800)
- Rice costs Rp. 10,000,000 – Rp. 12,000,000 per month (approx. \$1000 - \$1200)
- Vegetables and other food costs Rp. 8,000,000 – Rp. 10,000,000 per month (approx. \$800 – \$1000)

We wish to thank all of our sponsors and donors, for your support and prayers.

With love in Christ our Lord.

COLLEGE CORNER

Reformed Bible College, PNG

Mark Mulder

As I indicated last time, the RCBC was looking at it's biggest intake of students ever, and that has indeed eventuated! We have 24 enrolled students and so we are well on the way of achieving our 20/30/30 vision. Graduate **20** godly leaders from the Diploma program. Teach **30** students hungry for God's Word each year. By 20**30**

What a joy it is to teach a class of 17 students, and even better, they are asking lots of questions. I think there are a number of reasons for that. With small class sizes, students weren't very forthcoming with questions as they would really 'stand out'. Also, in this society, teachers are the ones with the knowledge and it's their job to pass that knowledge on, no questions asked. Fortunately this mind set is changing, and that is what we're witnessing now.



Certificate students hard at work

The other change that has occurred over the last 5 years is an increasing level of academic ability, which has resulted in more students seeking greater clarification.

Having students at the college coming from many different regions of PNG means there is quite a diversity of cultures. It is wonderful to see that our common basis, God's Word, allows for students and staff to live at peace with one another. To be sure, mistakes are made, and misunderstandings occur, however, because of Christ's redeeming work, reconciliation can be made, and an atmosphere of peace can reign. Ewe know that Satan is busy, so it's our constant prayer that we all can live in peace and harmony.

The arrival of the Versteegs meant that, for the first time in the history of the RCBC, we actually have more lecturers than needed. This was deliberately organised so that Rev Kleyn could have block 1 free, and Rev Vaatstra could get block 2 free, which then enabled them to work in the churches for a sustained period of time. It really highlighted how much this is needed and so we express, again, how thankful we are that the Southern River

“

It is wonderful to see that our common basis, God's Word, allows for students and staff to live at peace with one another.”

Mission Board has commenced a search for a minister dedicated to church planting / church support.

We also received the very welcome news that Rev Melvin Dotinga along with his wife, Jane, received special permission to enter PNG so that they can teach in block 3. Though it's easy to enter the country if you're vaccinated, it's not so easy if you choose not to be vaccinated. Our LORD moved the heart of the deputy covid controller such that he stamped and signed the approval papers! What a relief, particularly for Liz and myself, as we plan on being in WA during block 3. Now we can go knowing that the workload will be manageable.

In Christ Alone.



The RCBC Family

BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

April—July

Rev. Ryan deJonge 10.05.

Silas Pol 21.05.20

Mrs. Ruth deJonge 24.05.

Shanelle van der Kamp 08.06.15

Grace van der Kamp 09.06.17

Cornelis Kleijn 09.06.81

Scott van der Kamp 17.06.21

Matthew DeJong 18.06.08

Isaiah Pol 18.06.18

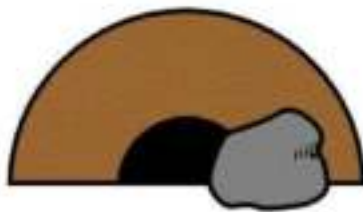
Rev. David Pol 24.06.90

KIDS MISSION CORNER

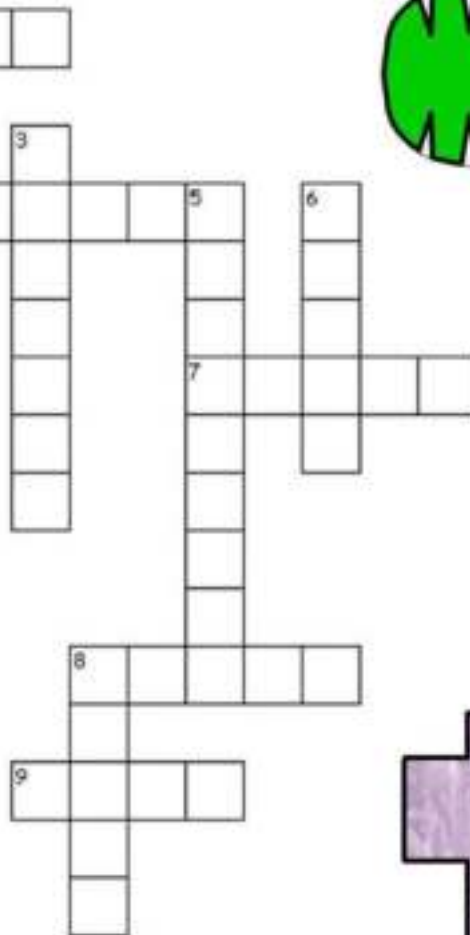
- Easter Colouring-In
- Easter Crossword
- James and Andrew Fishing Maze



Easter Crossword



Word List:
 bread cross
 sacrifice love
 stone hosanna
 empty risen
 slept thorns



Across

1. Taking this during the last supper symbolized Jesus' body.
4. Jesus was forced to wear a crown made of these instead of a crown meant for a real king.
7. The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, Jesus isn't here; He has ____!"
8. Instead of praying the disciples did this when Jesus went off to pray by himself.
9. The main reason that God gave His only son, Jesus to die for each of us.

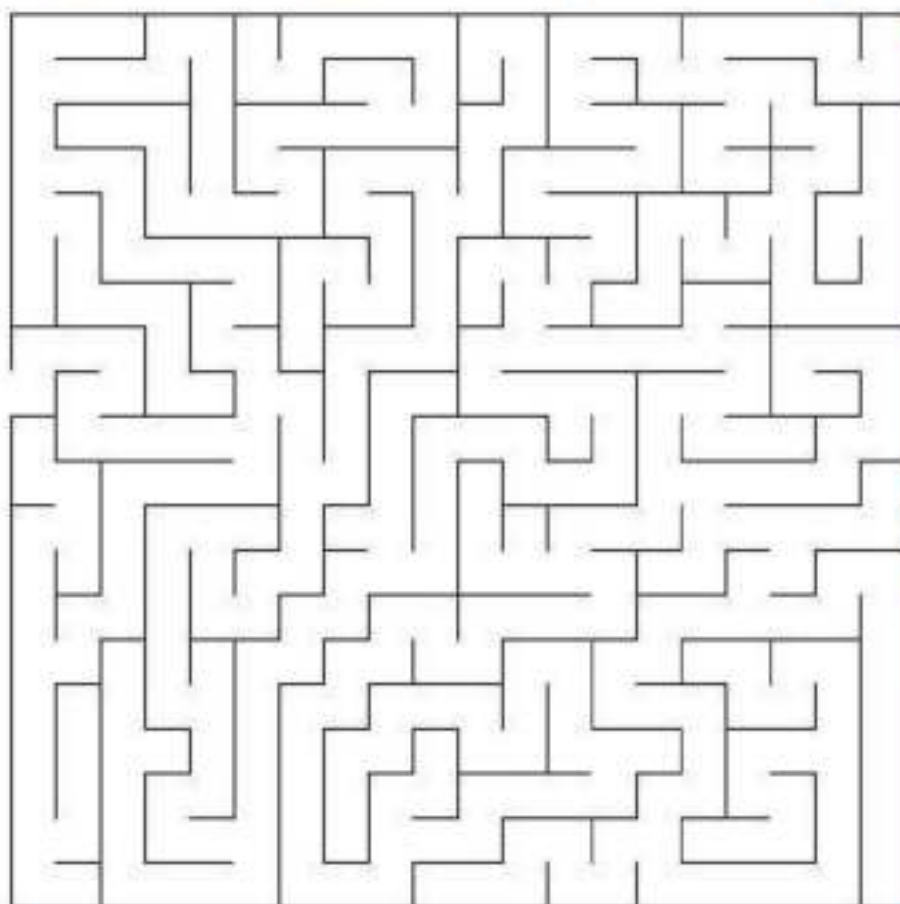
Down

2. On Sunday the two Mary's didn't find Jesus but a tomb that was ____.
3. The word people shouted to Jesus that means blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
5. Jesus became the ____ for us, so we could be forgiven for our sins.
6. Jesus was meant to die on this.
8. This was put in front of the tomb so nobody could steal Jesus' body.

Help Peter Find Andrew Fishing Maze



Help Peter find his way through the
fishing village to Andrew.



MISSION COMMITTEES

Indonesia • Papua New Guinea • Philippines • Sabu • Sumba



Mission North East Papua New Guinea



Sending Church: Southern River

Cooperating Churches: Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, West Albany, Southern River

Supporting Churches: Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Launceston, Legana, Melville

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General Deputy: R Dekker (DD)

Meeting Secretary: R Plug (By)

Report Secretary: D Hordyk (By)

Treasurer: E Eikelboom (By)

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Missionaries: Rev R & Mrs R DeJonge, Rev D & Mrs E Pol

Mission Workers: Mr B & Mrs M van de Kamp

Web: www.frcmissionpng.org ; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/271603523844307>

Mundijong Mission (LITINDO)



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Secretary: R Bosveld

Treasurer: D Minchin

Mission Aid North East PNG



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Treasurer: Gerrit deVos

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Mission Board Liaison: Elaine VandenBos

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Mission Indonesia



Sending Church: Rockingham (R)

Supporting Church: Baldivis (B)

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Vice-Chairman: Br B Bosveld (B)

Treasurer: Br B Bosveld (B)

Minutes Secretary: Br B Pleiter (B)

Correspondence English: Br Q Slobe (B)

Correspondence Indonesian: Br B Bosveld (B)

Consistory Liaison: Br A Byl (R)

Member: Br J Moesker (R)

Evangelists:

Rev Muriwali Yanto - Malang

Rev Markus Ndihi Jawa - Tanabanas

Rev Yan Pariamalinga - Bali

Rev Balla Rihi - Maubukul

Br Jhems Umbu Ngabi - Lae Wunga

Rev Arison Pekambani - LaAu

Br Yan Laki Ngella - Lai Hobu

Br Melkianus Kalambar Tara Amah - Watu Bara

Ev Jekson Kambaru Windi - Dampit (Java)

Ev Novianus Benyamin - LKaingada & Katundul

Web: <http://mission.frcrockingham.org>

Mission Sabu



Sending Church: FRC Launceston

Committee: Chris Lee, Sarah Heys, John van Asperen

Pastors:

Reverend Mada Bihah

Reverend Windi Kurung

Reverend Djara Wadu

Reverend Amos Ndawa Mada

Reverend Yohanis Here Pa

Evangelists:

Brother Thomas Dida

Brother Lay Djama Riwu

Mission Philippines



Sending Church: FRC Baldivis

Chairman/Contact: W. VanderVen wvdv11@gmail.com

Members: H deJonge (B) D Veltkamp (B) J Bolhuis (K)

Rev. S 't Hart (Mel) Rev. C Vermeulen (DD)

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