

# MISSION NEWS

Mission Activities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

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# FINDING THE LORD IN THE DARKNESS: JONAH

Guest Editorial - Part 2

Rev. D. Pol

In the last editorial we found ourselves beginning to consider the question: How does a workman of God respond when he finds himself in a place that seems so dark and out of his control?

In the darkness, Jonah completely and fully throws himself onto the source of his hope. The LORD, source of his doom, can also be the source of his salvation. Jonah cried out to the LORD, his covenant God, and he responds with these beautiful words, "...and he answered me."

What follows Jonah's crying out is a three-part poetic verse that describes his distress and describes his response. It describes his darkest hour and the Lord's presence in this darkest hour.

Jonah begins with speaking about Sheol. Sheol could be a reference to hell, but more often it's a reference simply to the realm of the dead. Caught in the dark, Jonah feels just as if he is dead and doomed forever.

He says: "*For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me.*"

While it was the sailors who physically threw him into the water, what Jonah recognizes that God uses instruments. It's because of God that he ended where he was.

He plunged into the water, into the heart of the seas. "*Floods surrounded me; All your billows and Your waves passed over me.*" These words which David wrote in Psalm 42 figuratively Jonah now takes literally. They are God's billows and waves. It's his displeasure made real and vivid.

## **Abandoned?**

It springs to Jonah's mind, as it does with many who suffer greatly, that perhaps God has become his enemy. His doubt comes to life in words: "*Then I said, 'I have been cast out of your sight!'*" For a prophet of the Lord, this is a shocking statement. You can hear the grieving and desperation in his words.

But Jonah doesn't allow this thought to linger long. Following one quotation from Psalm 42, he brings to action another portion of that very same Psalm. Verse 5: "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*"

To exhort ourselves is an important thought. Sometimes when we are spiritually depressed it feels like even God is against us. In these times, we are called all the more urgently to take action. As the famed preacher Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones puts it:



“Exhort yourself and say to yourself: ‘Hope thou in God’ (...) And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, of who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world and say with this man: ‘I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. Who is the health of my countenance and my God.’”

And that is exactly what Jonah does. Having voiced his fear, he reminds himself: *“Yet I will look again toward your holy temple.”*

When our thoughts which spiral in on ourselves tell us that God is opposed to us, and that there is no more hope of pardon, faith responds. Faith rejects that thought. Jonah, likewise, immediately checks himself. Turning his thoughts to God he looks to the temple to

encourage him in his thoughts of faith.

### “Yet you...”

Again, Jonah’s thoughts spiral. He says:

*“The waters surrounded me, even to my soul.”* Certainly, the waters were around him, but he feels it in his very soul. *“The deep closed around me; (...) the earth with its bars closed behind me forever;”*

*“Yet you...”* The power of those words is incredible. *“Yet you...”* What a confession of the depth of the riches of God’s grace! Nothing faced him but death, yet he confesses: *“Yet you have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.”*

It was only by an extraordinary miracle that he was able to raise his eyes to the throne of God. Yet God *did* bring him up. He was down, down to the very depths of the seas, yet his cry ascended to the highest heights.



*“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to you, into your holy temple.”*

He remembered the LORD in his time of trouble and once again reminded himself of God’s presence in the form of the temple. But it goes further this time. For not only does he remember the Lord, but the Lord hears him. And the Lord brings up his life from the pit.

### **The Cross**

Today we don’t have the temple as a reminder. But we do have the cross. In our time of distress we *do* remember the Lord, but we remember him and his work through the cross.

It requires a miracle to lift our eyes from ourselves, from our own situation and from our own distress. But a miracle is what God provides. When we are spiritually distressed and cry out to him, we’re reminded of the cross.

For on the cross, God provided the antidote to our rejection. When we hear the words echo in our minds: “I have been cast out of your sight” we can say “No! I will look again to the Cross.” Because on the cross I find the one who was cast out of God’s sight. We find the one who was forsaken. So that we can hear and hold to the promise found in Hebrews 13:5, *“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.”*

In the final part of our passage we read the words: *““Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.” So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”*

Salvation is to be hoped for in the Lord alone. Those who seek it elsewhere, or in themselves will only be led to deeper and darker places. But those who turn their inward thoughts outwards, who forsake their worthless idols of alcohol, of self-medication and drug abuse, of selfishness, of broken pride, of nursing their own hurts in a myriad of different ways, will find that they are turning to a place of mercy. When they embrace these things, they forsake the grace they’ve been offered. But when they turn to God, they will find mercy from their distress.

We are not alone. While we are living, while you are breathing, God is still there. Our prayer goes up to him in his Heavenly temple and is heard by him there. It’s heard by him because the Holy Spirit is relaying our sorrows with groans that words cannot express. It’s heard by him because we have a mediator who stands at his right hand, who has bought the right for us to come before him. And that mediator pleads our cause.

“

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

Psalm 42:5

”

# NORTH EAST PNG MISSION

## Chairman's Musings

Frank Janssen

When you sit down every two months, to muse on the activities of the previous two months and muse on the activities of the future, very quickly you turn to God in thankfulness for the work that He allows to be done on the field and also with a sure knowledge that he has the plans of the future in His hands. With that strong foundation, it's such a blessing to be able to muse on the overseas mission work being done in PNG.

It's been a busy period for the mission personnel and continues to be so. In May they embarked on a preaching tour, but instead of going up into the highlands again, they returned to Lae. With Br David Kaupa currently doing his 'internship' in Lae and with Pastor Isidore returning from 6 months leave, it was good, along with Pastor Tony from Wantun, to go preach in the markets in Lae. Not wasting any precious moments, at night back at LCM, they preached to the hungry there. There is such a hunger for the true gospel in PNG, it is such a blessing that we are able to continue in the task of spreading the name of Christ to the lost. May God continue to bless these preaching tours.

Also in May, the Reformed Churches of PNG held their classis meeting. One of the churches in the Port Moresby region requested advice about institution and classis agreed to form a committee to review the request.

If the Lord wills there may be an institution in PNG later this year. This church will then join Lae as the instituted churches in PNG. Another blessing that was Br Cornie was given permission to preach an edifying word. He







will do his 'internship' in East Boroko for the next year, with a view to hopefully next year going before classis to be available for call. We are truly thankful for the continued blessing of God in the hearts of the people in PNG.

On a personnel note, in May, there was some celebrating of milestones. Sister Ruth celebrated a milestone birthday event, following Pastor Ryans's birthday, throw in a wedding anniversary for Pastor David and Sr Erika, and a child's birthday or two and there was indeed time of personal reflection on God's blessings too. We are very grateful for the care that God provides, and we pray that He continues to hold them all in His hand and keep them safe. Pastor Ryan, Sr Ruth and family will have holidays in June, we wish them a restful time and hope they enjoy the visit from Ryan's parents. Br Ben, Sr Merinda and family will be going on holiday to Canada in August to catch up with Ben's family, so here again we wish them a wonderful time of reconnection and also hopefully a break from their day-to-day task in PNG. Pastor David and Erika must wait a little longer for their break, as they plan to take furlough in Australia from Oct 23 – Jan 24.

As a Board, we met with the Co-Operating and Supporting churches for our annual AGM, what a blessing it was to be able to reflect on the work in PNG. The budget and working plan were approved and mandated. An additional item was also approved, this was a proposal for a summer internship in PNG. This internship will be open to all young men from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, who are considering (on the path to) going to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Hopefully, in the next Mission News, we can expand on that further and invite applications. We also thank the members of all the cooperating and supporting churches who support the work very generously with financial gifts and continue to keep the work of Mission in their prayers.

Last time in the musings, I wrote that I could only copy and paste the paragraph from the preceding musings about the search for a missionary for the churches in Port Moresby. Well, I can't do that this time, as with thankfulness there has been some development. Unfortunately, the timing of this edition doesn't really line up with where we are at with the calling process, so I can't be specific and need to note that this might be old news by the time you read it. However, the Board and Southern River consistory have dealt with a proposal to call a candidate for the work in Port Moresby. At the moment, that is where it is sitting. Please pray that the proposal can continue to proceed and that a call goes out.

Jumping overseas to Canada, I would like to pass on the fact that the Toronto Board of Foreign Mission (who together with New Zealand look after the work in RCBC) has extended a call to Rev Cody Swaving of Smithville. By the time you are reading this, he has either been to PNG or is currently in PNG visiting the field whilst he considers the call. We pray that the Lord will give him wisdom to understand where the Lord calls him to continue in his task.

For the Board, we are soon to lose a very loyal member. Br Delroy Hordyk, whose name you would generally see in every bulletin at the bottom of the PNG updates, will be moving to the new church in Cardup. As Cardup Brook isn't a Co-Operating church (hopefully it will become...) this means that Delroy has to resign from the board. Delroy has been in the unique position of serving on the board for two different congregations of Armadale and Byford. As such in the past 19 years, Delroy has served on the board for 16 years. In a board with quite a regular and high turnover of members, it has been a huge blessing to have someone consistent with a lot of past knowledge and precedence. Whilst Delroy is quiet in nature, his work on the board speaks very loudly. Delroy, all the best in the 'move' to Cardup Brook, may you be a blessing there, and from the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

## PRAYER POINTS

Pray with thankfulness for the milestone celebrations that Pastor Ryan and Sister Ruth and Pastor David and Sister Erika could experience in the past couple of months.

Pray for a blessing on the holidays of some of the families so that they may recuperate and have a restful time.

Pray for the calling process for Missionaries in PNG from both Canada and Australia.

Pray with thankfulness for the Classis meeting and for Br Cornie as he commences his internship.

Pray for the co-operating and supporting churches so that they may continue to hold the work of Overseas Mission in their prayers and be able to continue to financially support the work.

# WHAT DOES MISSION AID NORTH EAST PNG DO?

## North East PNG Mission

The aim of the association is to provide financial support to various projects which aid the mission team in PNG in fulfilling their task. These projects are identified by the mission team in PNG as well as the mission board in Australia. Currently, a lot of the projects centre around covenant education and the Christian schools in Lae and Wantun.

### **What are our current projects?**

#### *Support for Christian Education:*

Mission Aid provides financial support to Living Water Christian School in Lae and Logos Glory Christian School in Wantun, so that covenant education can continue to be taught. The teachers use the 'My Fathers World' curriculum, which has been determined to be the best Christian curriculum for the schools' circumstance. Parents of students are required to pay school fees, but the financial support given by Mission Aid helps to cover the budget shortfall for the schools, thereby allowing covenant education to continue. The money is mainly used for teacher payments ("amamas") and the curriculum costs including freight.

#### *Teacher Professional Development:*

It is a blessing to be able to use the 'My Father's World' Christian curriculum in the schools as described above, but in order for it to be used most effectively, the

teachers in PNG need training in how to use it. This project gives financial support to assist teachers from Australia who are willing to fly to PNG and teach the teachers.

#### *Teacher Training Scholarship:*

This project gives financial support to PNG church members to assist them in obtaining qualifications required to become a teacher in PNG, or to complete



Logos Glory Christian School with teachers—  
Mama Regi and Mama Clara



further education with the intention of pursuing teacher training in the future. Currently, a teacher's assistant at Living Water Christian School has requested support so that he can complete his year 12 education and train to become a teacher.

*Building support:*

Several years ago, money was allocated to support the building of Living Water School in Lae. This money will be used to help replace the thatched roof with tin.

*Birthday appeal:*

Most of the supporting and cooperating churches of PNG mission have volunteers who give envelopes to members on their birthday to raise funds for general projects. A recent example of how this was used was in printing a devotional written by the pastors in PNG for church members there. The money raised through the birthday appeal also goes into a general reserve in case of medical or education emergencies, or something similar.

**How do we raise funds?**

Funds are raised through the birthday appeal, specific project appeals, general donations, and annual pledges. We give thanks to God for the financial support we continue to receive from all our donors, and reflect on



Current Living Water Christian School roof which is to be replaced with tin DV in the coming year



Teacher training professional development held in 2022

the great blessing of the support we receive from our church community.

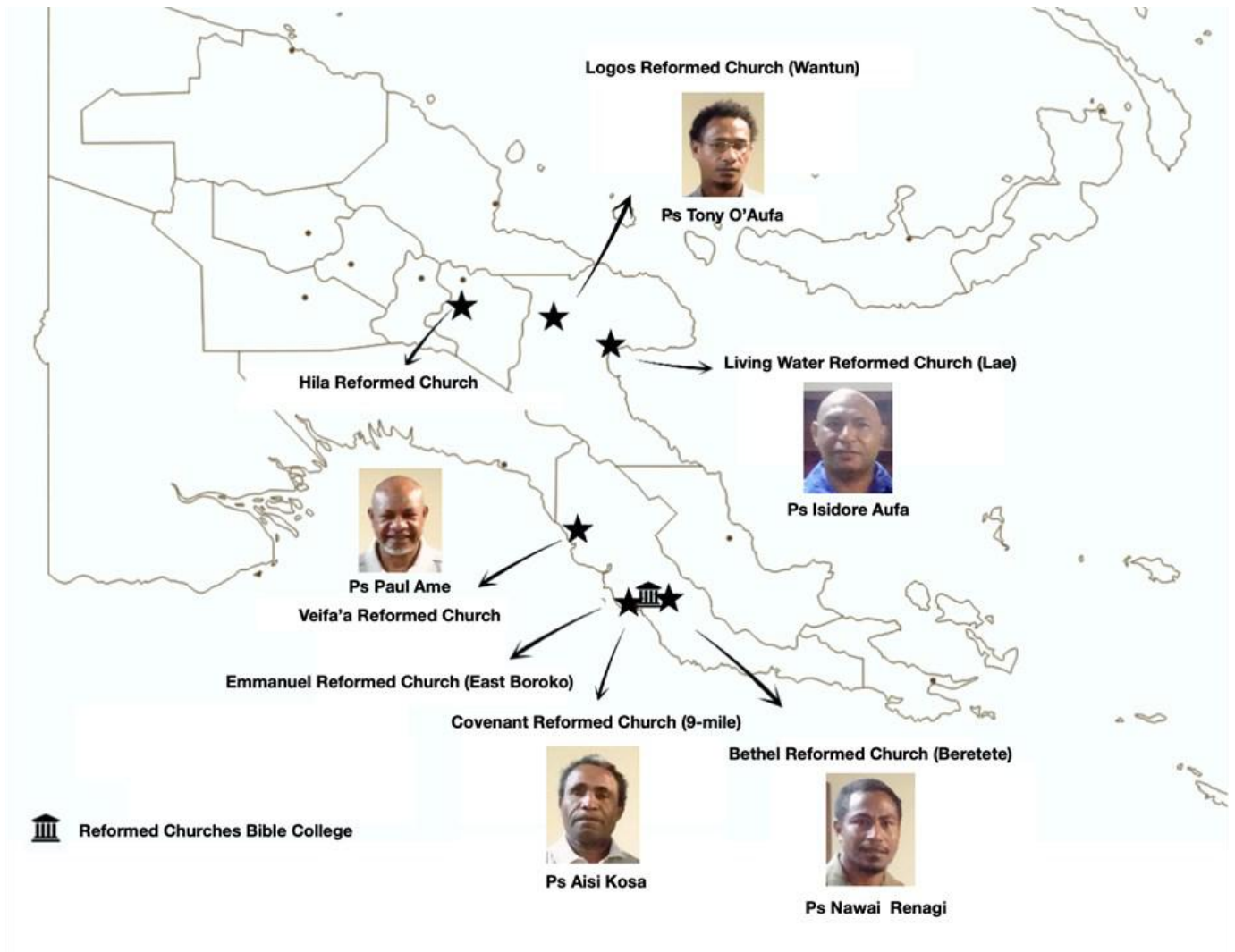
Currently, we have a number of donors who have pledged an annual donation to the Christian Education project, and we are incredibly grateful for their generosity. When this project started, it originally supported the Living Water Christian School only. However, since that time, the project has been expanded to support Logos Glory Christian School too. As a result of this, our annual donations for this project are approximately \$8,000 less than is required. Therefore, we humbly ask those who are not currently supporting the project to prayerfully consider supporting this Christian Education project by pledging an annual donation. If you are willing to pledge, please send an email to [treasurer.missionaid@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.missionaid@gmail.com) with your details. Once-off donations for any of our projects are also gratefully received. Our bank details are: BSB 066 131, Account No 0090 2095.

Whether you are able or unable to give financially, we would appreciate your prayers, that God may bless these projects, covenant education in PNG, and the continual efforts on the mission field – to His glory.

Mission Aid North East PNG.

# REFORMED CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Location of the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea and the pastors who work amongst the people



# MAY 2023 PREACHING TOUR, LAE

North East PNG Mission

Rev. D. Pol

May 15, 2023, about 5:30am. I first hear the rumble of a diesel engine coming down the hill, and then the headlights of a 10-seater Landcruiser swing into our driveway. Loaded down with boxes of magazines, an outreach tent, tents, sleeping bags, speakers and more, Ryan is ready to go. After a false start, in which we briefly had to head back to the far side of Ukarumpa to pick up some things that were left behind, we were on the road for Lae.

Three and a half hours later and a 1,600m drop in elevation and after a brief stop (relatively speaking) to pick up Pastor Tony in the Markham Valley, we pulled into the humid city of Lae, at Living Water Reformed Church in Kamkumung. There we unload what needs to



be left behind, connect with the rest of the team and load up again. Ten of us will head out, with five of us pastors taking the lead. Everything is set for sixteen outreaches over the next four days.

Why Lae? We had initially planned to go to the Highlands to do an outreach in Kundiawa. On previous preaching tours, we have run up and down the Highlands highway, hitting markets all along the way. However, there was such a good reception in the more distant areas of the Highlands (namely Kundiawa), that we had originally decided to stop there for the whole tour and do one long outreach. God had different plans. A number of things arose that made it logistically difficult to do good follow-up after that outreach. Yet the thought of remaining in one place for an outreach remained. With the coming of Candidate Pastor David Kaupa to Lae to learn under Pastor Isidore, the thought came up: Why not Lae? Lae is a major port city. Lae is the gateway to Northeast PNG. What news comes up in Lae spreads throughout Morobe Province and heads up to Goroka. From Goroka, it spreads throughout the rest of the Highlands. We knew this already, as our very first established church was in Lae for that very reason. But now there was even more reason to do so: we have two pastors there who can follow up effectively. For all of those reasons, but especially in the providence of God, we ended up in Lae.





The Lord was good to us over those four days. We are at the tail end of the rainy season and the clouds that come are often threateningly dark and heavy. However, he wanted his Word to go out. Apart from a single afternoon which was a scorcher, the clouds provided shade from the blazing sun, letting the crowds stay longer. The rain, too, held off. Though there were moments when we felt rain sprinkling, we were blessed with amazing weather for the outreach. The only hour of rain we had during the day happened during the one hour we were at the tire shop, changing two of our tires: one of which had blown. (This, too, was providential in its own way as it would have been a lot harder to take care of these tires on the back roads in the Highlands!)

More than just weather, the Lord provided listening ears and open hearts. Starting on Monday, with an outreach at a bus stop in Town, we proceeded to preach throughout Lae in teams of two or three. We preached in the marketplaces, the bus stops, the street corners and at Lae City Mission (a vocational training centre for young men, many who came off the streets as criminals). By God's grace, everywhere we went there were people hungry to hear the good news. I won't pretend that masses were converted or that we have floods of people coming to church now. Yes, we handed out over four hundred pamphlets which included a map to the location of Living Water Reformed Church. Yes, many people met us after the outreaches and expressed interest in coming to church. But such speech is also cultural, showing appreciation for the message that was preached without necessarily bearing the fruit of bodies in the pew. However, we still have reason to believe that the seed

still fell on good soil.

Why would I say that?

For the first reason, we sold over 1,500 Tulait magazines. Many people wanted to take something home to reflect on after the outreaches and were willing to spend money to hold onto it.

In one outreach at the Chinatown market, after we had finished preaching on the lie "Only Good People go to Heaven", an SDA pastor immediately started to set up on the far side. SDA churches here are tremendously legalistic and demand a strict obedience to the law: including worshipping on the Saturday, barring people from eating pork and not lighting a fire on the Sabbath. Unless you strictly follow these laws, you won't make it into heaven. One man was heard saying to him as he was setting up: "We just heard the truth preached. What are you going to preach?"

After another outreach, we came into Wickid Chicken for lunch (comparable to KFC). The security guard had





bought magazines from us. The ladies behind the counter whispered: “It’s the pastors!” and a table of men inside noticed us as well, saying “It’s the Reformed guys.” This in itself, of course, is no marker of acceptance of the Word. However, it shows us that in this area, many people came to know us and receive us positively.

Lastly, wherever we preached, there was a good reception. People were hungry to hear. People nodded and were engaged. The crowds grew and most remained for the full hour and a half to two hours that we preached and bought magazines after. People agreed that what we taught was Biblical, not like many other street preachers who go off on tangents of their own and try to strike fear in the hearts of their hearers. And on some occasions, some came forward to confess their sin and pray with the pastors who were available. It didn’t matter which topic it was: the lie that only good people go to heaven, "Act like men" (I preached on the horribly prevalent practice of marital abuse and buying your wife, others preached on marriage or on parenting) and "Sanguma" (witchcraft/sorcery, many people still kill others because of witchcraft accusations and live in fear of sorcery. Some have even been burned alive), all were thankfully well received.

As we packed up Friday Morning at 5:30, ready to hit the road for the three and a half hour return to Ukarumpa, I was able to reflect with thankfulness on this outreach. The Lord was good to us. He provided safe travels, good

weather, listening ears and open hearts. This past Sunday we had five new men show up in Living Water Church and Pastor Isidore was able to talk with them for some time after the service. A part of me wished I could have a God’s eye view of what kind of conversations rose up in the homes of all the people who watched, who considered, who bought magazines and who expressed appreciation. Yet we are content that all this will be left in the hands of our sovereign God and Father. Our little team of ten, five pastors who preached and five supports, are sowers who went out to sow under the Chief Sower, the Son of Man. Having planted the seed, the Living Water church will follow up with visits and their own outreaches, watering the work. Beyond that, it is up to us to leave the rest to God who makes it grow.

Pray for the work. Pray that the outreaches may fall on good soil. Pray that whether in the church or out, the fire of Reformation would spread throughout Papua New Guinea. But most of all, pray that whatever the outcome may be, may God be glorified.



“ Pray that whatever the outcome may be, may God be glorified. ”



# MISSION WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES

## Mission Philippines

Rev. S. 't Hart

Although seeing new places and meeting new people is always nice, there's something special about returning to visit friends and a city you know quite well. That's especially the case when it comes to visiting a church and fellow Christians that you've grown to know quite well.

The FRC Baldivis has had a ministry among Reformed believers in the southern island of Mindanao, the Philippines, for about 12 years and over that time I, along with others, have had the privilege of walking alongside the brethren there as they've grown in the gospel, deepened in their understanding of the Reformed faith and become established congregations in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Butuan. In April 2023 Br. Justin Bolhuis and I had the privilege of visiting them once again and it was a delight to do so. It had been quite a while since either of us had met with the brethren there face to face and we stood in awe and thankfulness at how the Lord has blessed them these past few years. In both Butuan and Cagayan de Oro the Lord added to their number during the Covid period and although are still relatively small, they are vibrant communities, increasing in knowledge and growing in their walk with God. Their love for and also understanding of the Reformed faith is humbling. There is a real eagerness to be faithful in practicing their faith, also in their families. It was a delight to sing our praises to God as we gathered together for worship, hearing not just adults but also small children joining in. There are still challenges and the church members there face many of

the same concerns as we do in Australia but God is faithful and He has blessed them.

We had a busy schedule for the two weeks we were there, meeting with consistories, leaders and individuals, visiting various church communities, teaching in a number of seminars, and listening and advising them as



Pastor Ernel Tacandong, his wife Divine and three children.





Pastor Jeff Uriarte, his wife Michelle and son Aslan

they shared their thoughts, hopes and dreams for the ongoing growth and development of the Reformed churches there. There were many things to talk about with respect to the development of the churches there, but in this issue of Mission News I will focus on two things: how we are preparing for the ordination of ministers and how the churches there are now reaching out into new areas.

### Preparing for Ordination

For the Reformed Churches of the Southern Philippines to continue to progress it is necessary that they be pastored by ordained ministers. Since there is no Reformed seminary in the Philippines, alternative means for training men for the ministry need to be found. In addition, there are men who have previously been ordained and/or served as pastors in other (evangelical) churches prior to becoming Reformed. The challenge we've been faced with is how to proceed with the ordination of ministers in Cagayan de Oro and Butuan and in particular with two brothers who are currently preparing themselves to be ordained.

The Grace Reformed Church of Cagayan de Oro is being pastored by br. Jeff Uriarte. Jeff has a 4 year Bachelor of Ministry degree and has previously worked as an ordained pastor in an evangelical church, from 2009 - 2015. Since becoming Reformed and serving the Grace Reformed Church in CDO, Jeff has undertaken a lot of

study and has attended numerous seminars as well as completed a number of courses. Jeff loves to learn and has a passion for teaching. He would like to continue to study even after ordination.

The Butuan Reformed Church has, for the past 3 years, been pastored by br. Ernnel Tacandong. Ernnel previously came from Cagayan de Oro and moved with his family to Butuan to serve the church there. Before becoming Reformed, Ernnel completed a four year theology course from 2008-2012. Following the completion of these studies, as well as a year of internship, Ernnel chose not to present himself for ordination in the Evangelical church he was then a member of since by then he had embraced the Reformed faith. From 2017 - 2020 he worked as elder in Grace Reformed Church CDO while at the same time attending various seminars and classes. Since 2018 Ernnel has been studying (mostly online) with the Heidelberg Theological Seminary, a seminary connected to the



Pastor Ernnel in conversation in the new church group in Cordova, Cebu



Lunch fellowship (including frog) in Maramag

Reformed Church of the United States of America. During much of this time, I have also been mentoring Ernnel in his studies, having Zoom meetings with him about once every 6 weeks.

Both Jeff and Ernnel have progressed well in their preparations to be ordained as Reformed ministers and the churches there have asked us to assist them further in teaching and training and then, when the time is right, to assist in their examination and, if the Lord wills, their ordination.

### **New areas for ministry**

An exciting development in the Philippines is the opening of new areas for service, particularly in the regions of Cebu (central Philippines) as well as Bukidnon and Zamboanga del Sur in the southern island of Mindanao (where Butuan & CDO are located). Three groups have formally requested help from the Reformed churches of Butuan & Cagayan de Oro, and so we talked about how to best go about doing this.

**Cebu.** On April 10-12, along with Pastor Ernnel Tacandong of Butuan, we visited the Grace Reformed Mission of Cordova, a small church plant in the centre of the Philippines, less than an hour from the Cebu

International Airport. This Church has a relationship with the Butuan congregation and that is being assisted by them. When we visited them, two pastors from other independent Reformed and reforming churches in the area were also there. These pastors recognise their need for broader support as they themselves grow in Reformed theology & practice and as they minister to the people under their care. We enjoyed our time of fellowship with them and are excited about the progress of the Reformed faith in that region.

**Maramag.** On April 19 I travelled to the city of Maramag, about 3 hours driving from Cagayan de Oro. This city has a population of about 100,000 people and has a university close by. Sugar cane is a major crop in the region, employing many people in the region. There is a small Reformed group who meet under the guidance of Pastor Lloyd Galleros. Br. Lloyd is currently preaching through the Book of Mark, making use of Rev. W. Bredenhof's sermons. They are also studying both the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. This church group came into contact with the Grace Reformed Church of Cagayan de Oro through our sister-church in Singapore.

**Pagadian.** When I was in Cagayan de Oro, there was also a pastor and deacon from the Orthodox Reformed Church in the city of Pagadian, about 5 hours from Cagayan de Oro. This church consists of 12 families as well as singles with a total of 80-90 people. This church started out as an Evangelical Church but in 2019 the pastor, Alden, embraced the Reformed faith and began to introduce this to the congregation. On December 2022 Pastor Alden formally requested the CDO Grace Reformed Church to guide their church towards institution and for himself to be installed as a Reformed pastor.

These are exciting developments and we look forward to see what the Lord has planned. There is also reason to think that other church groups could also be reaching out for help in the near future. The challenge for both the Butuan and Cagayan de Oro churches is that to guide

and mentor others is a relatively new experience for them and their resources are limited. They are now asking us for help and advice as they in turn guide and assist others. We came up with a roadmap on how to do this but it will take more time, study and interaction to work this out further. Although we will see how the Lord directs things from here, the cry for help appears to be genuine in most or all of these cases. These are exciting times, requiring, prayer, work and partnership. Please join us in thanking God for what He is doing among the Reformed Churches in the Philippines and let's pray the churches we are blessed to be able to partner with.



Reformed Church of Butuan

# BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

June - August

Shanelle van der Kamp	08.06.2015
Grace van der Kamp	09.06.2017
Cornelis Kleijn	09.06.1981
Scott van der Kamp	17.06.2021
Matthew DeJonge	18.06.2008
Isaiah Pol	18.06.2018
Rev. David Pol	24.06.1990
Isaac VanderWal	25.06.2011
Liz Mulder	02.07.
Mark Mulder	02.08.
Abigail DeJonge	12.08.2014
Nikolas VanderWal	13.08.2009
Madison VanderWal	15.08.2015
Jonathan Kleijn	19.08.2008



# NEW HOPE UPDATE

New Hope

Femmy Dethan-Bouwman

The Lord is good, His Love endures forever!

Greetings to you from our favorite camping spot in Timor, Barate beach! We are here together with a bunch of Canadians enjoying the warmer temperatures for about 10 days! Who would have thought that it would be possible again to have another Wings to Work team come out and experience a bit of Timorese culture, cuisine and most importantly see firsthand of how the Lord's Kingdom grows in this corner of the world.

It has been a roller coaster of a week filled with various activities working alongside with the New Hope children and locals. The focus as always is on establishing bonds between brothers and sisters in the Lord, encourage one and other and share the joy we have in our God and Savior. The W2W team had raised funds for a classroom to be build for the Elpida school in Fatuleu. The actual building of this classroom is done by local carpenters, yet the team was happy to help lay the foundation! A couple of days were spent giving a fresh look to the existing classrooms as well. Teaching English as a second language was another highlight, this was a mutual learning experience where the team members also learned some Indonesian phrases.

A couple of afternoons were spent at the New Hope Home where the team got introduced to the picking of fresh coconuts and of course got to enjoy this cool treat.

Energy levels restored, it was time for games, some serious Indo soccer (bare foot) and crafts with the girls. Although the language is a bit of a barrier spending time together was hugely enjoyed!

The past two months have been busy for the Elpida students completing their year end exams.

We are thankful to report that we had some exceptional achievements by our students this year. We had several students who graduated from high school with the best marks in their class. This is a testimony to the hard work and dedication of our students, as well as the quality of education and support they received at New Hope.

Hard work does not always show itself in high marks, it will stand out in diligence, self-discipline and good





character. The Elpida schools hosted a very special graduation ceremony and party to celebrate the hard work of all the High School, Middle School and Elementary School students that completed their years of education at the various stages. A beautiful moment to reflect back upon God's grace and strength given to students and teachers alike to teach and learn about the wonderful things our Lord has made and done.

We are heading into the 'summer' break, things quiet down substantially at New Hope, some of the graduates return to their home towns, others continue their education at the next level whereas some choose to enter the work force.



Please pray for all the children as they seek the Lord's will for the next step in their lives.

Please pray also for the students continuing their current journey that they will not lose sight but continue to work hard with all the talents and means the Lord graciously provides.

We ask your prayers as well for the plans the Elpida school has to expand the trade schools by opening up 3 new vocations to offer a wider variety of interest to the students. It is our hope to be able to offer training in Auto motive Mechanics, Sewing and construction.



On behalf of the New Hope foundation, I thank you for your support and prayers that allow this important ministry to continue.





# SPONSORS UPDATE

Children of Light

Compiled from messages received from Isabel Postmus-Pakering



Dear Sponsors,

Some months have passed since we have received a formal newsletter from the Reformed Senior Highschool (Our main correspondents, Isabel and Obed, have been travelling and since their return are at capacity with their daily activities). While we wait for a new report from the school, here are some updates from Isabel regarding day-to-day life to keep us up to speed with the goings on in Sumba.

## Rice

We are facing a season of hunger in Sumba. The tidal wave gap in the harbour is huge this year, greater than normal. This has made it super difficult for ships to dock with cargo, grain, rice, food supplies. We cannot buy rice in bulk easily at the moment, which normally gets a reasonable bulk bargaining price. This makes it hard to secure 50 kg sacks of rice for the boarding home at the Reformed Senior High School.

So the first problem is difficulty for ships to dock and unload to secure a bulk rice order. The second problem is that we have had limited rains so far. It rained very little and haphazard in December and January, not widespread, so rice farmers have limited water inflow. Just the last four days it began to rain a bit more consistently. Now problem 3: We have had a growing plague of locusts and grasshoppers throughout Sumba,

over the past 6 months, and it gets worse. Nothing seems to work to fight against them. Many farmers have given up on planting seed for corn and rice, because after the plants are half grown, the locusts-grasshoppers come in swarms and eat everything in the field. I have seen them do this in and near Waingapu city myself. After a few hours they take off and go find the next fields. Their numbers keep growing. Now many farmers have no harvest, flattened fields, and no money left to buy more seed again for planting. Thus both the rice and corn crops are failing here, and very little locally grown rice is reaching harvest. This means we rely on imported rice – coming in by ship – but the ships cannot dock because of huge tides.



Travelling from Wanggemalo village to Karuwage village on the Kali Arup (meaning River Cassowary)



We were buying rice in bulk for \$50 per bag per day to feed 102 students at the boarding home (we had a bulk order of 30 sacks per month straight off the ship) but now we are struggling to find a shop that will sell us even 1 sack of rice. So we have to drive many km to collect a few sacks and the cost has gone up to \$65 per 50 kg sack of rice per day, for the boarding home.

I do not know how long it will take before the ships can dock in the harbour properly again. However, for the time being, our rice and rice transport costs are significantly higher than normal, going from about \$1,500 per month for about 100 students, to about \$2000 per month. We hope the situation regarding rocketing rice costs will improve by May, but are not sure. Most ships coming in with imported rice have a short time docking window of about 3-4 hours on a

good day: come in, unload at the harbour for a few hours, then have to sail out into deeper waters again as the tide surge goes out. The next day they try again. It takes days to unload what normally is a 24-48 turnaround time. This adds to days in the harbour, waiting to unload, and the shipping costs rise. There is a queue of ships trying to dock and unload, waiting in deeper waters for the right tide levels, and only 2 large berths for docking when they come in. Very tricky. When rice is unloaded now it is sold off by the shops within 24 hours.

We think this rice problem is specific to the NTT province and to Sumba especially, because of the combination of poor scattered rains, rebuilding of infrastructure since Cyclone Seroja is limited, poor local harvest, a massive Locust-Grasshopper plague that is out of control, strange tidal surges in the past two months



Outside the Pastor's house in village Kouh

that make the docking of ships with imported rice problematic and add time-cost delays to ship unloading schedules.

### **Monthly Costs**

The Reformed Senior High School has a government registration and assessment check to organise and pay for over Feb – March, a requirement in preparation for conducting national exams for Year 12 students that starts at the end of March. So, on top of teachers' wages that are now normally \$3000 per month, we have an additional once-off school payment requirement of approx \$600, sometime in Feb or early March. We hope that this is not too much of a bomb on top of rocketing up rice costs.

Currently monthly expenditure is approx. \$6000, as follows:

\$3000 teacher wages

\$1500 boarding home rice

\$1300 boarding home food

\$200 administration and transport costs.

### **Staffing**

Otati is expecting her second child in May/June. Last year in Oct/Nov Corlin left to do her Masters in Education on a government scholarship grant. Corlin was helping to manage the village home students support program, so her departure left a hole here. We will have a big gap to fill in supervising students at the boarding home by coming May. Also, although Otati has tried to work with two others to fill the gap left by Corlin, she cannot get out to the distant villages that Corlin managed to reach before. So we do not yet know about our semester-long needs for the village home students in Middle School.

I have discussed the situation with Otati, with the YSDG chairman, and with Yandri who is still in Jakarta. Yandri is now finishing her studies and doing her final thesis papers (a communications degree). She can hopefully be back in Sumba by April or May. The chairman of YSDG said that if and when she returns to Sumba, she needs to do a proper work application for the Ref Senior High

School and YSDG. She could potentially do the following tasks: 1. Help supervise the boarding home students, to relieve some of Otati's time slots. 2. Do school secretarial work. 3. Help prepare files and paperwork for the next school accreditation visit in 1.5-2 years time. [Unfortunately we have since heard that Yandri is not willing to sign a work contract with the Reformed Senior High School]

### **Living Costs**

The minimum government set standard wage for basic survival set in the NTT province is \$200 per month for a family of 4, 2 adults, 2 children, no babies, no milk powder needed, no special needs. It is also the teachers' minimum wage. That was from 2019-2020. Before petrol costs went up from 70 cents to \$1.20 per litre, and before rice went up from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per kilogram. It assumes that people live partly from the land as well, harvest some own veges, walk to school, and use a motorbike sparingly or minimally.

Most standard families in the NTT province consume at least about 2 kg of rice per day, used with breakfast, lunch and dinner. So a small family of 4 normally buys a 50 kg bag every month and tries to make it last a full 30 days.

That means a monthly wage for the family of around \$200 is first used to buy the 50 kg sack of rice for \$50-\$54 (that was until Dec 2022, but now it has gone up to \$66-\$70 per 50 kg sack just in the past 2 months).

Basic milk powder is sold per 800g packet is also up from \$8.20 to \$10 per packet that is under a kg. Wheat flour was \$1.10 last year, but now \$1.50 here. For ourselves, we have rice with lunch and dinner, not breakfast, and I often cook a sweet potato dish for breakfast. Only the twins have rice porridge for breakfast. Some days we skip breakfast. Otati has reduced portions at the boarding home too.

### **Suffering**

Last week Friday I attended the funeral of Ester in Waimarang. She had passed away in a motorbike accident in the city on Sunday evening. I had been

visiting with her in Matawai after church on Sunday, and she dropped me off at home. In the evening, after the accident, we were immediately informed. Ester was sitting behind a student from the Reformed Theological College, on the back of the motorbike, and she was flung off from the bike in a sudden impact hit-and-run, where the second motorbike hit them, fell, the person did not help but immediately left the scene on their own motorbike. Ester was left lying on the road. I went to the hospital as early as I could, and she had passed away from a large skull fracture on the back of her head. No helmet... In Denpasar and Jakarta helmets are compulsory for all people on a motorbike. But in Sumba most motorbikes have one helmet, and only the driver wears it. The person behind rarely wears a helmet, and sometimes even the driver does not wear a helmet. Often, when people wear a helmet here, it is worn without the clasp done or fixed, so in an accident the helmet flies off or is dislodged easily.

Myself and four other women washed her, changed her clothes, and I focused on washing her hair and face and head, and trying to stem the flow of blood that continues after death. We prepared her body for ambulance hearse transport from Waingapu city to Waimarang, her home village. I was thankful to cry with her mother over her passing away, as I felt that Ester was somewhat of a daughter as well as a friend. I trust that she is with her Lord and has joined the great cloud of witnesses in heaven. She was 27 years old.

About 24 hours after Ester passed away, the father of the neighbour's children next door to us had a heart attack and also passed away. That funeral was on Saturday, with an additional service on Sunday for other relatives to attend.

Early this evening a 20 year old daughter of a family living just up the road from us also passed away. She was sent to study in Yogyakarta, but came home very sick and thin about 6 weeks ago, and spent the last month in hospital in Sumba. From the symptoms, I suspect a type of Leukaemia. There is little to no treatment for cancer of any type here in Sumba. My husband and Ruth went to this family up the road this evening, for condolences.



Village Woutu Kolof

So the last 10 days or so have been busy with suffering, death, and consolation for those who remain. Our house was opened and used for the neighbor's funeral and catering for food and visitors from distant villages. A very busy time.

It reminds us to always be ready for when the Lord may call us Home. It is a big lesson to me about the frailty of human life, and how easily we can 'snuffed out' if the Lord calls us home.

We continue to pray and work and trust that the Lord will lead us through this difficult time, and teach us to rely on Him for our daily needs, and to live by grace.

*The rice crisis and increasing costs are not an emergency situation for CoL and we have advised the school not to ration, as we have sufficient funds in our reserves at present. However there are some significant building improvements required in the near future, so we certainly welcome new sponsors & donors.*  
CoL



# KIDS MISSION CORNER

Let the children come to Me!

Colour and cut out the  
bookmark



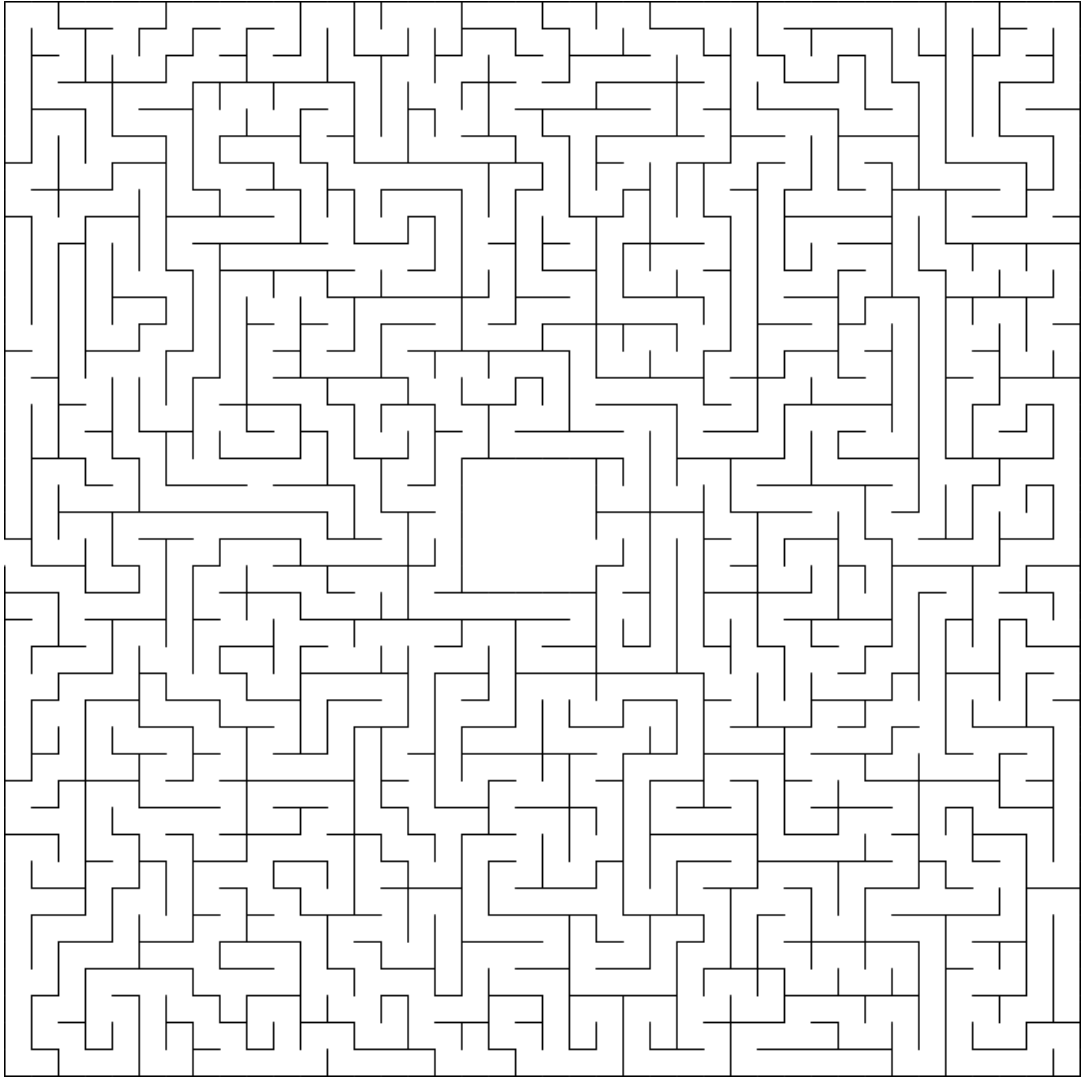
Let the children  
come to Me,  
and do not  
hinder them, for  
to such belongs  
the kingdom of  
God.



Now they were bringing even infants to Him that He might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him, saying, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

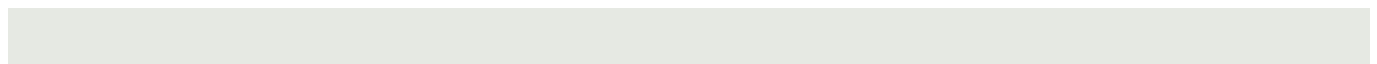
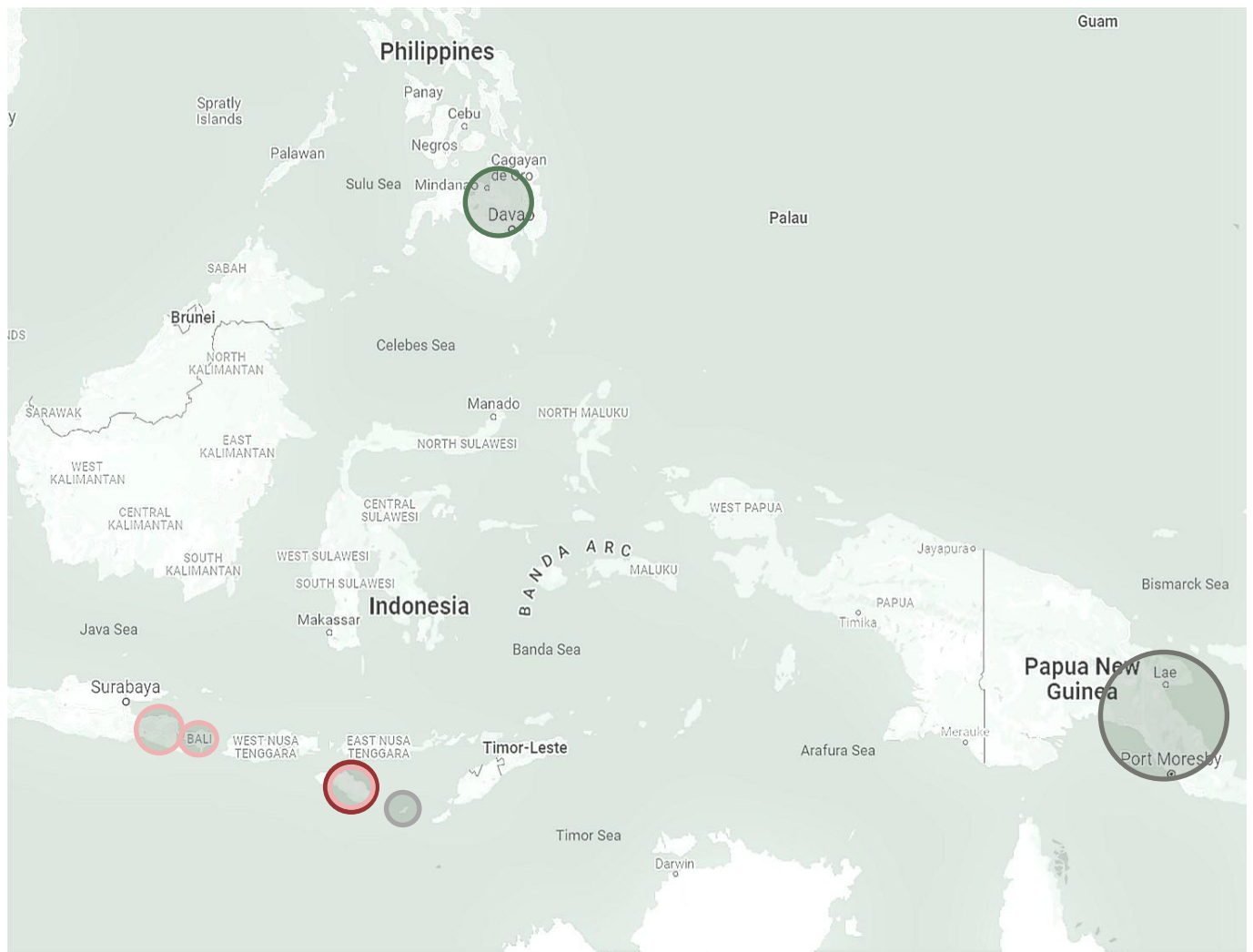
(Luke 18: 15-17)

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here



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Article submission address: [plugd@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:plugd@jcs.tas.edu.au)