

MISSION NEWS

Mission Activities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

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*"For I am NOT ASHAMED of the Gospel for it is the POWER of GOD
for SALVATION to everyone who BELIEVES."*

Romans 1: 16

Guest Editorial

THE SOUTHGATE FELLOWSHIP AFFIRMATIONS AND DENIALS

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While our Reformed churches haven't been lax in doing mission, we certainly haven't been prolific in writing about it. Our work in the area of missiology (the study of mission) has been notoriously miniscule. This is a shame for two reasons. First, Reformed theology has a lot to offer the field of missiology in general. Second, in the last half-century there have been some deeply concerning developments in this field which Reformed theology is well-equipped to address. These developments are not just theoretical, but have an immense practical bearing. Not only would our churches and their missionary activities benefit from more Reformed missiological reflection, so would many other Christians.

To that end, I'd like to introduce you to a document developed by The Southgate Fellowship (TSF). As they describe themselves,

TSF is a fellowship of theologians, missiologists, and reflective practitioners fully committed to the visible church and her Christ-appointed mission. In obedience to Christ

and his Word, TSF exists to advance biblical thinking and practice in world mission, as captured in the *solas* of reformational theology.

TSF started meeting in 2016 and participants hailed from Canada, the United States, and Europe. The TSF Council consists of several men, three of whom are affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of America, two are (Reformed) Baptists, one is an Anglican, and one is from the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

This year, TSF published its "Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission." This document was published in the journal *Themelios*. It's also readily available on the TSF website. This document (hereafter AD) contains 100 sets of affirmations and denials on a host of contemporary missiological issues. Some of those issues include: the authority and nature of the Bible as revelation from God, extra-biblical revelation (such as dreams), contextualization, whether salvation is possible apart from Jesus Christ, and the relationship between word and deed ministry.

Appreciation

I have great appreciation and approval for almost all of AD. What I appreciate most is that it begins with a high view of the authority of Scripture:

We affirm that Scripture authoritatively and uniquely reveals and explains the meaning of the redemptive work of God in history, centering in and accomplished by Jesus Christ, and provides authoritative and sufficient instruction for faith and obedience, including authoritative and sufficient instruction for faithful dissemination of that unique message. (1e)

AD presents a view of Scripture which every Reformed believer ought to affirm – one which is in full agreement with what we confess in the Belgic Confession. This is solid rock on which to build the rest of the affirmations and denials.

For example, the word "uniquely" implies that no other "sacred text" is in the same category:

We deny that one can pick aspects of the non-biblical sacred texts and declare them in any way to be Holy Spirit-inspired. (12d)

Furthermore, the Bible alone is God's ordinary means of

salvation. Then what about dreams or visions?

We affirm that if God were to use extraordinary means today (e.g. miraculous events, dreams or visions), that these occurrences should be interpreted providentially either as pre-evangelistic *praeparatio* [preparation], uncommon tools in God's hand for sovereignly drawing people to himself, or as divinely purposed tools for hardening unbelievers in their unbelief. (15a)

I appreciate how AD seeks to do justice both to the unique nature of the Bible as well as the reports one sometimes reads of how people are drawn in through unusual means.

TSF is also to be commended for their biblical definition of mission. AD asserts that mission involves the "verbal proclamation of the gospel, by which the Spirit of Christ calls people to turn in repentance and exercise faith, for the glory of God" (66a). The greatest need of sinful human beings is Jesus Christ. So where does that leave Christian acts of mercy? They're not mission, according to AD. However, mercy ministry can never be separated from mission (74a);

they belong together. Missionaries who show no compassion for the suffering and needy are not carrying out a faithful ministry (73b).

There are many more positive points I could mention, but I want this brief overview to give you a taste so you'll go and check it out for yourself.

Concerns

I also want to highlight a couple of areas that could be problematic. Even though AD is long, it still lacks a lot of context. There are points where I wish there was further explanation. This is especially in the section on ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). For example, I put a question mark behind this statement:

We affirm the value of working across denominational boundaries (within or without mission agencies), according to biblical principles of ecumenism. (77a)

My question would be: what are "biblical principles of ecumenism"? How are those defined?

Similarly, in the same section, there are affirmations and denials regarding the relationship of churches to mission agencies and parachurch organizations. Two worth noting:

We affirm that visible churches bear the primary responsibility for the theological, moral, and ministry-method oversight of missionaries. (75a)

We affirm that the visible church has the primary responsibility to recruit, mobilise and send individual church members into mission. (75b)

The qualifier “primary” is what grabs my attention here. Why not “exclusive” responsibility? If we’re working from a biblical perspective, isn’t it the church (and only the church) which sends out, supervises, and supports missionaries? Also, I’m perplexed about the use of the plural ‘churches’ in 75a and the use of the singular ‘church’ in 75b – I’m not sure if there’s a fine theological point being made there.

While I’m generally appreciative of the section on culture, there seems to be an overstatement of its relationship to religion. Affirmation 87a reads:

We affirm that the word ‘culture’ is used generally to describe the shared set of artefacts, characteristics, meanings, and values that give shape to the total corporate life of a group of people.

That’s a fairly conventional definition for our day. I would note the mention of “artefacts” – this is referring to things like eating utensils, cooking implements, and musical instruments. Older definitions of culture by Reformed theologians like Klaas Schilder often ignored this aspect of culture, so I’m glad it’s included here. But these statements then raise questions:

We affirm that culture and religion are interrelated, interdependent and inseparable, the latter informing the former. (90a)

We deny that any facet of human culture may truly be a-moral, a-theological, or a-religious. (90b)

I wonder: if chopsticks are a facet of human culture, how are they, in themselves as material artefacts, related to religion? It seems to me that their *use* is what ties them to religion, i.e. whether you use them to eat to the glory of the true God. This could use some clarification.

What’s Missing?

It’s a long document and fairly comprehensive, but there are some things barely mentioned or not at all. For instance, I’d like to see more about the historic creeds and confessions. They’re

mentioned in the section on the Trinity (22a), as well as in 71a’s affirmation about how local theologians should be accountable to “formulations of the Christian faith.” This is good, but I wish there was more. I also wish that AD had statements regarding worship and the place of women in mission.

Mark 13:35,37
“Watch, therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming... lest he find you sleeping...”

Overall, AD is as faithful and comprehensive statement on mission as I’ve seen from a biblical perspective. In 1999, the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission released its Iguassu Affirmation. While that statement had some biblical content, it doesn’t really measure up to what the Southgate Fellowship has produced. Any Reformed believer interested in mission (which should be all of us!) ought to read and study these Affirmations and Denials. Perhaps it will stimulate the further development and expression of Reformed missiology in our circles and beyond.

Rev W. Bredenhof

Armadale Mission Board

CHAIRMAN’S MUSINGS

It is with much joy when your email pings at the end of the month and there it is; the Field report sent by the field workers to the Board. For the next hour or so, you might pour over the details, you might smile when they throw in a joke or comment, you might shed a tear when they explain a hard situation, BUT you are always taken aback by witnessing the Awesome work of God that He does in PNG.

Even with COVID 19 restrictions in place, Pastor Ryan is still able to do his task (see his article), and Ruth and family are doing very well, especially home schooling is going well. We praise God for that.

We have just heard from Ben and Merinda that they received their passports back with the entry permits, so that step is complete. Its now waiting time to see when they will be allowed to leave Australia and fly to PNG. We pray that this happens quickly, but we rest assured that all this is in Gods hands. In the meantime, Ben and Merinda are busily working on their preparation which includes language studies, culture studies and packing up their belongings. They are having weekly catch ups with Ryan and Ruth via Zoom, no doubt something that both couples look eagerly too.

long with all the current workers on the field and the other mission boards that support the work in PNG, we are still very much on the lookout for more missionaries to assist in the work. We wait and pray for the Lord to lead the right man to the field. Please also take a moment to pray for the work at RCBC, whom due to COVID 19, are now teaching being very short by one lecturer (as the guest lecturers cannot come in). May God also continue to work in the hearts of the students at RCBC and if the Lord wills, may there be more indigenous Pastors, evangelists, elders and deacons that can support the work in PNG.



Ben & Merinda & Family

Reformed Mission PNG has started up a new Facebook group to replace the current Facebook Page. We aim to use this group to promote overseas Mission, specifically focusing on the work done in PNG. We invite you to request admission to this group (admin will need to approve your request) and then

also invite your friends to join. The group is called ‘Reformed Mission PNG’ (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/271603523844307>)

The board continues to appreciate the support of the co-operating and supporting



churches for the work done in PNG, may you all continue to pray for the work being done. At the beginning of May, the Free Reformed Church of Armadale hosts what we call an SCC meeting. This is a meeting of all the Supporting and Co-operating churches that support the mission work. It was a joy, and whilst we couldn't do it face to face (although many faces, see picture), to share an update with the churches of the mission work, the support is amazing! May God continue to bless the work done in the PNG!

Prayer points:

- Pray for the men to hear the call for foreign mission. Pray for the raising of missionaries in our families. Pray that Mission work will never cease until the Trumpet call.
- Pray with thankfulness that Ben and Merinda received their entry permits. Pray now that Australia will allow them to go to PNG soon.



- Pray that God will continue to give Pastor Ryan and Ruth the strength to do their task especially as they too eagerly await the arrival of Ben and Merinda.
- Pray for the work of RCBC, where due to COVID 19 they are one lecturer short for the next couple of teaching blocks. Pray that God will give Pastor Cor and Br Mark Mulder the strength to continue in their task.

Frank Janssen

Chairman Armadale Mission Board

WHEN GOD CLOSES A MARKET

That last few months have been very interesting times in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In many parts of the world, these have been very difficult times, with outbreaks of disease and economy- and livelihood- upending measures taken to limit the spread of that disease. Thankfully, PNG has remained relatively unaffected by the COVID-19, especially in comparison to the rest of the world. In fact, if you organise all the countries of the world according to the number of deaths/population and the number of cases/population, you will see that PNG is at the very bottom of the list: only 8 cases and no deaths. We are still mystified at this but give all

praise and glory to God for His kindness to this country.

There is good reason to praise the LORD for this, as He is the one who rules and governs all things according to His eternal plan. There is another reason too, and that was the eminently wise decision of PNG's Prime Minister to call for a Day of Fasting and Prayer when the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was discovered here. We sought the Lord and He answered.

One unfortunate but understandable result of the lockdown was that street preaching was banned. Since preaching in markets around Lae and other

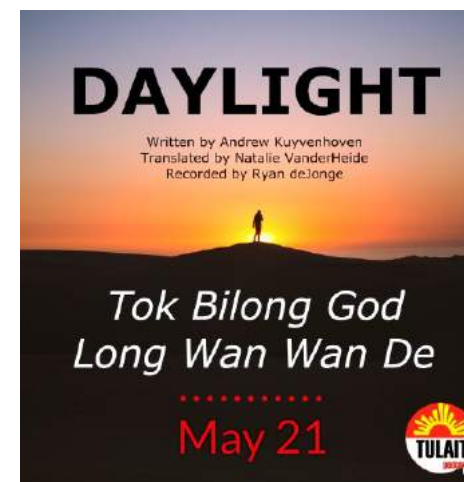


places in PNG is a big part of our mission strategy, this seriously impacted our work. But one motto I always carry around in my mind, which I repeated to many, many couples in pre-marital counselling as a pastor is this: Conflict provides opportunity. And while this wasn't exactly a conflict, there

was an opportunity to begin something that I had been stewing over for some time, and I began recording audio resources and distributing them through Facebook.

I think the thought process behind this is important and might be enlightening for your context as well, and so let me expand on it a little. As a missionary, one thought that is constantly going through my head is, "How can we reach more people with the truth of God's Word, the gospel." This is the thought that stands behind the production of the Tulait magazine, which you are no doubt familiar with. This is also the thought that stands behind the market preaching that we do, as well as the tours that we make into the Highlands region each year. But one frustrating aspects of spreading the gospel here in PNG has been that they lack one of the main channels of distribution that we are familiar with in Australia: the Internet. Yes, the internet is here, but access and usage is very limited. Here's an example. In Canada, if I wanted to find out about a store or company, I would simply google their website and have all the information I need. If I needed to call them, I would find the phone number on their website and be in contact in no time. I was endlessly frustrated in my first year here by looking for websites and finding none, or finding one only to realize that none of the phone numbers worked because it hadn't been updated in years.

But in the past year or so I have seen a major surge in two things: smartphones and Facebook. Three years ago, I was timid about pulling out my iPhone because I didn't want to draw attention to it. Last year, I started to realize that this was not an issue, because many people had newer and larger phones than I had! Facebook has a 72% of the market share of social media in PNG. And with "Facebook plans"



available, people can surf Facebook much cheaper than they can surf the internet. Now, instead of searching for a website, I look for a company's Facebook page and there is always up-to-date contact information there!

To be clear, I am not a social media guru. In fact, before coming to PNG, I didn't have a social media account. But just like the printing press was boon for the Reformation in Europe, and radio has been a catalyst for spreading the gospel in the Middle East and other places, social media has a tremendous potential for spreading the gospel here.

So, when the lockdown came, I set up a podcast called Tulait Podcast, made a Tulait Media Facebook page, and got to work. I also started recording the daily devotions that Natalie VanderHeide translated from the *Daylight* devotional by Andrew Kuyvenhoven, a print copy of which we are working toward publishing. These all get put on a podcast that is available through all the usual podcast apps, but since many here don't use the "usual" apps, they also get promoted on Facebook. The results have been encouraging! A podcast on the government asking churches to close generated a lot of discussion. A Mother's Day episode resulted in some 200 shares. The social media advertising has resulting in anywhere from 200 to 900 downloads of various episodes.

There is a lot more to learn and to expand in this new (for me) frontier, but it seems clear that the closing of the market preaching door has exposed another great opportunity for sharing the gospel in PNG. The challenge now, as parliamentarians here debate ending the lockdown and street preaching is likely to soon be allowed again, will be to find the time to utilize both of these means effectively and fruitfully for the spread of the gospel and advance of the church. The field are white for the harvest! Pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers.

Pastor Ryan deJonge



2020 College Year...

The 2020 College year got off to a very encouraging start by virtue of the fact that we could enrol 6 new students, which meant our student population totalled 17. With a number of the students being married, their families also came to the College, so at the beginning of February the campus was a busy place. We thank Him for this blessing, and we pray that He will be near to our students during 2020. One of the challenges we're confronted with is to help all the students get on with one another. Coming from different parts of PNG and living together on the campus 24/7 means a fair bit of give and take. Organising Friday night fellowship activities, and having students work as teams in the garden for 1.5 hrs, three times a week, helps create a very positive environment.

Still being short a missionary, we need to organise guest lecturers for each of our 6 blocks. Before last year had ended, I was so thankful that we had all 6 blocks catered for, for this year. And then that little virus came along and made us realise anew that man plans,

but God directs! Thankfully Ps Henry Versteeg and his wife Rita entered the country before COVID19 impacted flights etc. We were also fortunate that Ps Melvin Dotinga and his wife Jane arrived well before Block 2, due to them wanting to do some mission work in the north of PNG.

Not long after both lecturers arrived the coronavirus phenomena basically shut everything down. It didn't take long to realise that our arrangements for Block 3 – 6 were 'up in the air'. At least we had Blocks 1 and 2 covered.

Here in PNG we only had 8 reported cases of COVID19. The health system here is poorly resourced so we pray that there won't be any outbreak. I must say that we have been very impressed by the response by our Prime Minister, Mr James Marape. He is a Christian, and the first thing he wanted the country to do, after the country recorded its first case, was to pray to God. In



Three Cuties!

fact, he announced a National Day of Prayer, beseeching his fellow citizens to go on bended knee before God! He also immediately closed all borders, even internal borders, closed schools and declared a state of emergency which ends on June 2nd. The community has responded very well. We pray that God will be merciful to PNG; an outbreak here could be disastrous, given the living conditions that so many have to endure.

Life at the College has continued on as normal, with minimal COVID19 interference. We have used this outbreak to reinforce an oft repeated message that it is very necessary to wash your hands well, and cough into the crook of your elbow.

One of the positive developments of this viral outbreak has been the use of zoom. It has allowed us to be more connected to our sending church where we can participate (when available) in weekly prayer meetings, men's bible study etc. The time differential between Toronto and us works out well; a 7pm meeting is a 9am meeting (the next day) for us. We even downloaded a service and 'live streamed' it to our College community. It was quite something for our students to see the inside of "white man's church".

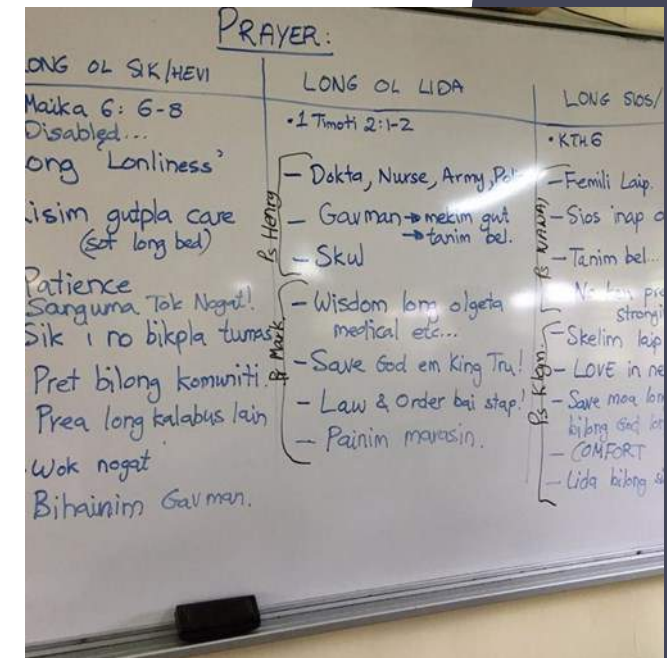
We are now half way through Block 3 and the challenge faced by the Versteegs and Dotingas was getting out of the country! The Versteegs managed to secure a flight after being contacted by the Australian embassy who advised them that a number of flights were leaving Brisbane for Los Angeles and that if they could get to Brisbane, they could then fly on to LA, and from there on to Toronto. The Dotingas are taking a similar flight path, with their final destination being Los Angeles. We thank the LORD that He blessed the College with their presence and that He provided a way for them to get back home. We pray that He will bless Ps Cor Kleyn and myself with sufficient energy to complete the teaching requirements of Block 3. We also pray that He will bless our plans for Block 4. Maybe, just maybe, there might be the possibility that our planned lecturer for Block 5 can come; we leave it in His hands.

Waiting on Him

Mark Mulder



Watching 'whiteman' church service



Prayer points for the Day of Prayer

NEW HOPE (HARAPAN BARU)

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles".
Isaiah 40:31



New Hope Home Update

A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps. - Proverbs 16:9.

Time and again we have to humbly acknowledge how the above verse is so true. At the beginning of this year the New Hope children started to prepare for the intimidating national exams, little did they or anyone else for that matter know how the world would come to a halt because of a virus!

About two months ago all schools closed, exams were cancelled leaving many children on their own to make the best of it. For the children living at the New Hope Home this meant the establishment of a new routine, they do enjoy the relaxed mode of studying at home, yet for the councilors it is full on!

For the Elpida students living at home, especially in the Soe area it is difficult to keep up

with schoolwork. Most parents can not afford to purchase data which would allow the students to follow online lessons. Most homes also do not have the textbooks and supplies needed for the students to effectively study at home. It is unclear as to how long schools will remain closed, the school year will end on the 27th of June, it is our hope and prayer that we are able to start up again with the new school year in July. So far the NTT province has seen relatively low positive Corona patients, the reality may be very different however because of the lack of testing available. Over the last two weeks there have been spikes in cases and also deaths including quite a large number of young children. The effect of this pandemic is already seen and felt in many ways especially by those already living below the poverty line. No one planned for this virus, it has altered our plans

and goals for this year, yet we trust that this too God will work out for the good of those that love Him.

Seventeen-year-old Andy was very eager to start grade 12 last June. Andy has been staying with us at New Hope for over 6 years and he can truly speak of how the Lord has worked through him and redirected the plans he had for himself.

Andy's father is currently very sick and has asked Andy to come home to help out. This was not what Andy had planned yet, he trusts that this too will work out according to God's plan. Andy shared his story with us of how the Lord has changed him completely since he came to stay at New Hope.

"I was born in a small town near the East Timorese border. I was raised in a strict Roman Catholic household. My father has a health condition which prevents him from working full time. Being

the oldest of a family of six I was expected to help out as much as I could; growing tomatoes in our garden. When I finished elementary school the plan was for me to continue my studies at the local Junior High School this plan was changed suddenly when I joined my father for a trip to Kupang to visit friends. While there, my father and I met with friends of friends whose daughter was enrolled in year 10 and spoke very highly of the Elpida Schools and the New Hope Home. They very much appreciated the Christian love, cares and also strict rules, very different from the previous school she had attended. My father was very keen to know more about the Elpida schools and New Hope home, it seemed to him the right fit for me considering I was starting to be a bit rebellious, yes I admit this to be true:

Dad went to check out the Elpida school and the New Hope home and right on the spot applied for a student bursary and requested for me to stay at the New Hope Home. It was all a done deal when he came back and simply said tomorrow I am going to bring you to New Hope and you will start school next Monday! Dad said it was the only way that he saw possible for me to actually being able to finish Junior High School considering his health condition.

Three years later I was on the bus going back home having just graduated from Junior High. A changed person, something my

family did not know yet. I had started reading the Bible at New Hope, I mean how can you not for everyday we have time scheduled for personal devotion, devotions together after supper and we are all expected to follow the Church services at the Reformed church on Sundays and Catechism instruction during the week. At first I defended the Catholic view very strongly, I brought all kinds of arguments defending the Roman Catholic practices. My friends at the New Hope home, teachers and Ministers continuously pointed out that as Christians our base is the Bible. At last this concept sank in, I could not agree less, this meant I could no longer argue based on tradition any more. I figured that our traditions my parents and the priests were also based on the Bible, so why not study the Bible? I continued to study the Bible day and night. The more I read the Bible the more I started to understand of how God wants us to worship Him. I was going to tell my family about this during this visit, they were not impressed and tried to force me to deny these protestant teachings!

I could not and would not, Dad seeing how much I had changed thought it better for me to attend a Roman Catholic High school and arranged for me to be enrolled at the Saint Peter High school in Dili. The Lord intervened, something went wrong in the registration process and I was not accepted, reluctantly my father allowed me to go back

to Kupang to continue my education at Elpida. I am so thankful for how the Lord allowed this, I don't think I would have been strong enough to defend my faith had I gone to the Saint Peter High school. Over the last three years I continued attending Catechism and pre confession class, last year I made public profession of my faith. I would love to continue my studies at STAKRI and learn more about God's word, yet my father strongly disagrees, the only place he will allow me to study Theology is at the Catholic Seminary, this is of course something I will not pursue. My father's health is declining and I have to go back home to help out, I don't know what the future holds but trust that God will work out His plan! Please continue to pray for me."

On behalf of all those involved at New Hope I like to thank you for your continues support and prayers. Thank you also for the monthly packages of second hand clothing sent, since the beginning of Ramadan a month ago all modes of transportation between Islands have stopped, mail and food supplies are still going but at an even slower pace than usual:) so it might be awhile for us to receive the next parcels.

Blessings,

Femmy Dethan-Bouwman



Mundijong Mission

UPDATE FROM OBED PINGGE

Sumba

Prior to covid restrictions the Resource Centre in Waingapu was manned from Monday to Friday by Reverend Benjamin Rohi and Obed Pingge. While taking care of the daily running of the Centre, our brothers are familiarising themselves with literature stocked at the Centre. They have also recently begun surveying the GGRI churches in Sumba, so as to compile a database of their details and also to enable them to prepare a schedule of suitable seminars to deliver in due time, targeted toward the needs of the churches. Here follows a report from Obed about his recent work.

Reading Room going well. For the moment, reading room more is used by the student of a theological seminary when they looking reference books to work their duty. And sometimes lecturers of Reformed theological seminary come to visit to buy books that they need. For the reader from out of GGRI, only some people visit as long as there is the reading room. They usually ask meditation books.

Maybe Sumbanese did not like to read books. So not many people come to visit and reading. Or maybe not yet we advertisement maximal. (Note: we have not yet opened the centre officially, we were waiting on final stock and furniture... and now we will wait until overseas travel is safe). Although, reading room not yet maximal used, I think the Sumbanese people need a reading room. Sumbanese need good Theology books.

If MMB (Mundijong Mission Board) wants to make more visiting, maybe MMB looking land for MMB itself to build the reading room. I think it is more attractive if the reading room there is a garden so people can choose to read

indoor or outdoor. Also interesting if in the reading room area there is a cafe so visiting can order/buy coffee, tea, hot drink, cold drink, cake, bread and also food (wrapped rice). it helps to make available place to work



Obed and Lince



Meeting with the consistory

for young workers of GGRI to increase the congregation economy.

MMB could prepare the auditorium. The auditorium can be used: meeting, seminar, and rent that room as the meeting room.

Information about The GGRI Karipi

Last week, I went to visit churches to take the information. On 29 February 2020 in the afternoon, I went to the Karipi Church (GGRI Karipi). I went by motorbike. Two hours on the way. Through damage road. Although through the damaged roads, I was happy because of the beautiful scenery in a long way. At 04.00 PM, I met with the presbyter/elders of Karipi and all branches and I collected information. I dinner and spend the night at the congregation house/member of church. And then tomorrow I join to worship with the Karipi congregation. After worship, I took photos and in the end I leave GGRI Karipi on 01 March 2020.

- People who first time spread the word of God in this place are Romu Mutu Milla Meha.
- This church is the mission of GGRI Tanarara.
- The first time they received the word of God in this place is in 1950.
- The working of most of the member of this church is the farmer.



GGRI Praihambuli are building a church. They are not yet finished and are temporarily borrowing the room of a school for their worship services. Obed suggests that if our economy stabilises, it would be a good idea to help them build their church building.

- The problem in service in this church is
- 1. deficiency of worker/ ministry in the church.
- 2. The economy of the congregation is minimal/ not enough to help the working in the church.
- To increase the capacity of ministers/workers in the church they need a seminar about how to teach the children and to teach what duty of elders.
- This church needs funds to finish or to make more comfortable their building of the church.
- And they need books for a minister to teach Sunday school and catechism. And literature theology that they need are dogmatics, church history, and commentary/ exegesis of the bible.
- The congregation hopes that there will be help for Psalm and Song books, and if possible to train the congregation to sing

Short Story of GGRI Lumbu Winu

I have documented a brief history of the GGRI Lumbu Winu for generations of the Lumbu Winu church in the future (note: this is a simplified version).

GGRI Lumbu Winu was previously a church of different denomination, Gereja Bebas, and at that time was called Gereja Bebas Baing. In 1997 the consistory of Gereja Bebas Baing approached the nearby GGRI Melolo to request to join the GGRI and become a branch of GGRI Melolo. There was disunity

in Baing; not all the members wanted to join GGRI.

The Baing consistory was hoping that GGRI Melolo could provide them with evangelists and especially help them practice the sacraments, as it had been at least 5 years since they had participated in Baptism and Lord's Supper. Melolo agreed to the request, as did the GGRI Synod that year, and the congregation was provided a graduate from the Theological Seminary to serve as evangelist. He did not stay long because he had to continue his studies; when he left the elders of the original church carried out the services until three years later another graduate was sent by Melolo: Ferdy Tipa Kaya (who is now a lecturer at the theological college).

Gereja Bebas Baing became an official branch of GGRI Melolo and changed its name to GGRI Lumbu Winu to reflect its new identity (as well as the true name of the location of the church which is Lumbu Winu and not Baing). Since this time, things improved in the congregation and church services. Some problems remained due to struggles regarding the building and land ownership until finally the GGRI group released the church building to the group that still maintained loyalty to Gereja Bebas Baing and the land was divided between the two groups.

After a "long and tiring eight years of guiding the church to

independence" Lumbu Winu became an independent GGRI church in 2005 and has since taken over some of the branches and mission posts of Melolo, as well as established its own. In 2005 the congregation (including branches and mission posts) numbered 318 persons and now there are 513 people (248 confessing, 192 baptised, 73 listeners).

Observations

- Majority of the members are farmers, some fisherman and the occasional government worker
- None of the eight branches/mission posts can provide enough for their pastor/leader(s)
- One branch doesn't have a church building or a permanent evangelist
- At another branch church members are spread far away from each other and some members don't come to church because of the distance

"May God will always bestow his blessings on this Church now and forever until the Lord Jesus Christ the King of the Church comes again".

Report on GGRI Praihambuli

- This church was a mission post of GGRI Maumarru and only recently became independent.
- The Word of God was first

received: 19 August 1952

- There is a centre church, two branches and three mission posts
- Most church members work as farmers
- The members are widely spread, and often have to visit each other by foot because of lack of adequate roads and paths for motorbikes.
- Many of the evangelists have not graduated from formal study, and do not have adequate books to support them in their work.
- Congregation economy does not sufficiently support cost of life of the church leader.
- In order to increase the spread of the gospel, this Church focuses on teaching the young generation to be people who spread the Word of God.
- Congregational needs: books for children (Sunday school students) and to help the Sunday school teacher, Bibles, and songbooks.
- The evangelists/elders request seminars to teach them how to preach the Gospel, how to teach the Heidelberg Catechism, and how to do pastoral work. Literature that would help them in their work: commentaries and the principles of Reformed theology.

Obed Pingge

CHILDREN OF LIGHT (COL)

From the Boarding House Counsellor

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ,

My name is Otati Kahi Pingge, and I have been one of the counsellors in the boarding house of the Reformed Senior High School in Pandawai (Sumba) since 2013. I am also a former graduate from the first cohort of students sponsored by Children of Light.

Praise be to the triune God for all the blessings that I have received through the help of brothers and sisters in Australia until now, and may the triune God repay their goodness.

In 2013 I started caring for the young adults in the boarding home. I had no prior experience, but was guided by brother Samuel Umbu Pingge, who at that time was also a boarding-house counsellor.

Our daily activities (in the boarding home) are:

Monday to Saturday:

04.30

Wake up and do devotions together

05:00 – 05:30

Private meditation, making a private commitment and prayer

05:30 – 06:00

Independent study for school lessons

06:31 – 06:40

Shower

06:41 – 07:10

Breakfast

07:15 – 14:00

School activities

14:00

Lunch

14:30

Midday sleep

16:00 – 16:30

Wake up and continue independent study

16:31 – 17:59

Practical activities and sport

18:00 – 18:30

Shower

18:45 – 19:29

Dinner

19:30 – 21:00

Guided study

21:01

Evening devotions together

22:00 – 04:30

Sleep



Studying together in the late afternoon

- The students take turns to lead the devotions themselves, which is arranged based on their grade and the level of their ability. I accompany them and give general advice to the students after each devotion.

- I must check, correct and fix the devotional book that is written by the students.

- The students are divided into groups for their practical work.

- The students that are on duty for preparing the food don't join in with morning devotions.

- I supervise the students when they study independently.

- The guided study time has a

schedule based on the individual classes. I help the students to complete their school assignments or study for their school subjects.

- In the late afternoon I organise the student's practical work. They complete tasks such as finding fire wood, making a place to wash plates or building a simple furnace, repairing the fence, making a road around the boarding house that won't be too muddy or unusable during the rainy season, or any other simple activities I can think of.

On Saturday afternoon and evening the students join a catechism class (the Heidelberg Catechism) that is taught by Reverend Samuel Umbu Pingge.

On Sunday our activities are a little bit different from our daily work. On Sunday we only prepare our food and drink and get ourselves and one of the classrooms ready for the church service. After the worship service, if there are no other activities in the church, the students relax. Later that night they study their school subjects again.

As a counsellor I have learned many good lessons from guiding the students in the boarding home. Yet, sometimes I feel like giving up when I need to face children with certain characters that comes from their family's educational background. Some students (usually those from families who don't prioritise education) are not serious about serving God. They often fight, disobey our rules and use dirty language, so it is very hard to help them form good characters. This is the hardest thing for me. I give them good advice time and time again but still need to punish them lightly or heavily.

Praise God that until now, God has helped me in carrying out my responsibilities in the Christian Reformed Senior High School boarding home.

Regards in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Preparing rice and vegetables



During the church service

Written by: Otati Kahi Pingge

Translation: Sarah den Boer

Submitted by Children of Light.

PHILIPPINES: TRIP FOR MARCH 2020

As I was eager to volunteer some time and effort during the three months of my sabbatical, I was thankful to the Mission Committee of Baldivis for providing me with an opportunity to do some teaching in the Philippines this past March. Accompanying me on the trip was Br. Dirk Veltkamp, a member of the committee and one who – like me – had never previously been to the Philippines. It was helpful to be able to read a number of previous trip reports before leaving, and equipped with this information we were eager and excited to go. I will admit that there was a feeling of the 'blind leading the blind' for the two of us (which often forms part of any first experience), yet upon reflection my sense is that the trip was very worthwhile, and I am grateful to the Lord for allowing me to serve in a teaching capacity in the Philippines.

Our original plans called for a departure from Perth on March 5th, an overnight in Manila and arrival the following day at the Grace Reformed Church in Cagayan de Oro (CDO), located on the large southern island of Mindanao. Our itinerary consisted of a series of lectures over the following days until our departure on March 13th for Butuan (a four hour drive to the east). Further lectures would be held in Butuan, as well as Surigao and San

Francisco before our return trip back to Perth on March 18th.

Late on Thursday March 12th, however, we were informed of an impending coronavirus lockdown scheduled for Sunday, March 15th in Manila. We had anticipated a shortening of our trip when we learned a day earlier that speaking engagements in the more remote towns of Surigao and San Francisco for the following week had been cancelled due to concerns over the spread of Covid-19. In consultation with Rev. S. 'tHart we felt there was no option but to cut short the trip and head back to Perth early the next day to avoid being caught in the lockdown. It is perhaps worth mentioning that while concerns over the coronavirus existed at the time of our departure, they were at that time still relatively minor, and the trip was still considered both prudent and viable. During the course of our first week in CDO, however, speculation and anxiety with respect to the spread of the coronavirus and its lethality increased dramatically on a daily basis.

Despite these challenges, we were blessed to hold a number of teaching sessions on a variety of topics, all of which were proposed by the coordinators in the Philippines. One morning and afternoon I

spoke to a more general audience in the congregation on the book of Psalms, addressing the Christ-centeredness of the psalms as well as the use of the psalms in public worship, personal devotions and prayer. Time was also spent discussing the function of the psalms in counselling situations and the manner in which parents use the psalms in raising covenant children in our churches.

One afternoon I taught pastors, office bearers and other young men about catechism instruction, touching on a variety of elements which included the history, content, method, and aim of catechism instruction. We also spent some time on catechism preaching and its distinctives in comparison to text preaching. I was asked to speak the following afternoon on holding a consistory/council meeting, highlighting the purpose of these meetings, their frequency, materials, functioning and the roles involved. An evening session was devoted to addressing the offices of minister, elder and deacon as described in the church order, while a number of lectures were also given on the various assemblies (consistory, classis and Synod) which are outlined in the second section of the church order. Lectures on



Br Dirk Veltkamp with some of our hosts in Cagayan de Oro (CDO)



A Modern example of how Pauls observation in Acts 22-17 can be applied to Philippine society

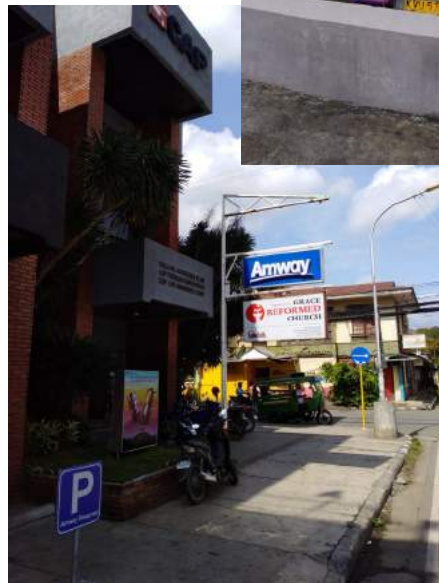


Table Talk Location CDO



Table Talk Location CDO

covenant theology, the distinctives of being a Reformed church and a number of other associated topics were planned for the second week but did not eventuate due to our unexpected departure on March 13th. Overall, I was very impressed with the participation in these talks and the enthusiasm of those who attended. There were quite a number of questions, which was a reflection of a genuine desire to learn and to grow.

As I've had some time following this trip to reflect, there have been many elements to consider, but the one distinct theme I kept returning to was the great blessing of being a *Reformed* believer in a *Reformed* church. It's something that many of us grow up with, and as a consequence we tend to think very little of it. Some of us may even struggle to be able to really share what it means to be a Reformed believer. What we believe and how we operate as a church and church federation all seems to be so normal that its richness easily escapes us. It was in teaching and sharing these Reformed beliefs and practices that their beauty came alive for me once again! My time in the Philippines was an invigorating experience, reaffirming how privileged we with our spiritual heritage. The Lord has blessed us richly with insight into the doctrines of God's Word and how Scriptural principles may be used in the organization of His church.

This is the lesson that the Reformed believers in the Philippines have really grasped! It was a delight to be among people who are excited to be Reformed and who know clearly what a blessing it is to believe the correct doctrines of Scripture. A number of people in the small but growing group in CDO have come from other church denomination after having been exposed to Reformed preaching and doctrine. They have made a conscious choice to join, and I hope and pray that many more do. The Philippines is officially a very Christian nation, with about 90% of the population self-identifying as Christian (Paul's words in Acts 17:22 come to mind). As part of the past heritage of Spanish colonialism, the Roman Catholic Church remains very dominant, yet there are also other major denominations, including the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Christ, and others, while the Reformed presence in the Philippines is very, very small. It is within this context that members of the Grace Reformed Church in CDO and Reformed believers in other areas place a high priority on maintaining their distinctiveness.

While they hold firmly to Reformed beliefs and practices, they remain eager to reach out to others, and I found that very refreshing. Since the Philippines is such an outwardly religious country, it's not so

much a matter of sharing with those who have essentially no knowledge of Scripture, but sharing more specifically what it is that the Bible actually teaches. Pastors from other denominations were invited to attend the lectures, and there is a level of connectivity with other church groups. I think there is something here for us to learn. Very often we close ourselves off to the wider Christian community, in large part perhaps because we can be so busy within our own circles. Yet since we believe firmly that our doctrine and church polity are in line with Scripture, that should encourage us to be eager to share with others. This takes wisdom, of course, but here as well I was impressed with the manner in which the group and leadership in CDO connected with those around them.

Finally, I was impressed with the commitment of the Reformed believers that I met. It's the courage of their convictions and their love for the Lord that spurs them on, yet that does not mean that things are easy. When you are such a tiny minority – a drop in the ocean – there is no doubt a strong temptation to flow with the existing spiritual currents. The Lord has worked powerfully in their hearts to encourage them to stand firm in their beliefs. It can be difficult to be in such a minority, and yet they are living out what they confess, which is beautiful to see! Under the blessing of the Lord there has been growth,

and I hope and pray that it may continue. I applaud the efforts of the congregation of Baldvis in supporting this work, something that is much appreciated by the saints in the Philippines.

In Psalm 67:5-7 we read:

Let the people praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear Him!

I was privileged to see anew how the Lord has richly blessed us, and how He works by His Spirit and Word to reach the ends of the earth. May He continue to gather, defend and preserve His church, also in the Philippines!

H Alkema

Psalm 121:8:

“The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in; from this time forth, and even forevermore.”

Psalm 93:1-3:

“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day.
Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous deeds among all peoples.”



Birthday Corner

JULY



AUGUST

Abigail DeJonge 12 Aug 2014
Nikolas VanderWal 13 Aug 2009
Madison VanderWal 15 Aug 2015
Jonathan Kleijn 19 Aug 2008

SEPTEMBER

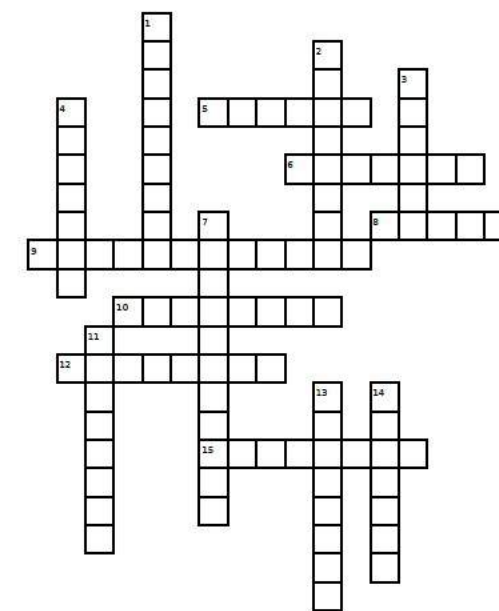
Andrew Kleijn 5 Sep 2011



CHILDREN'S PAGE



Capital Cities Crossword Puzzle



- Down:
- 1. The Netherlands
 - 2. India
 - 3. Philippines
 - 4. Uganda
 - 7. PNG
 - 11. Australia
 - 13. Brazil
 - 14. Indonesia

- Across:
- 5. Canada
 - 6. China
 - 8. Egypt
 - 9. South Africa
 - 10. South Africa
 - 12. South Africa
 - 15. Colombo

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