

# MISSION NEWS

Mission Activities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

~ VOLUME 16  
~ ISSUE 3  
~ JUNE 2021



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

Romans 1: 16

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The Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations is central to the church's calling. The church is not a mere lifeboat to which we cling as we escape from the world that is sinking around us; rather, Christ sends His church back into the world to proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Our Free Reformed Churches understand this and there is a strong commitment to see the gospel proclaimed far and wide. Indeed, the financial giving towards overseas mission by some of our churches is exceptional.

Most of us, however, want our engagement with the work of mission to go beyond a generic prayer for PNG or Sumba, the Philippines or whatever mission field we are supporting. We want this work to be a living thing among us, we want to have a sense of ownership, we want to be involved. But sometimes it doesn't happen that way. What might have been an exciting ministry to begin with loses its shine and our connection with the work being done in a far-off land seems disconnected to congregation life back at home. But what should we do about that?

Although we will all find some mission fields to be more interesting than

others, there is no missionary work that will be so compelling that it will grip the interest of the entire congregation indefinitely. Most of us have a short attention span and our interests will drift from one thing to the next. It is therefore good to begin not with our hearts' desires but with a right understanding of why we are called to be engaged in mission work in the first place.

The over-riding motive for mission must be the glory of God. Mission is ultimately the work of God in reconciling sinful mankind to Himself. Our missionary mandate is to be involved in God's work of mission, motivated by giving glory to God and seeking the establishment and growth of His Church. God is glorified by us when we are faithful to the missionary command to go and make disciples of all nations, and He is glorified when His Name is made known among the nations. We do not do the work of mission for self-glorification or the glorification of our local church for we must do nothing out of rivalry or conceit. (Phil 2:3) Just as Christ did not seek His own glory when on earth but the glory of the One who sent Him (John 7:18), we must do the same. And therefore we should not be motivated by seeking a mission work in which our local congregation can have more control. Ultimately it is not our work we are busy with, but God's.

Another major motive for the work of mission is our compassion for those who are without Christ and without hope in this world. We must retain a sense of urgency in calling sinners to repentance and rejoice when people are ingrafted into God's covenant and congregation.

We also want to see God's name preached throughout the whole earth. Since all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ, that authority must be proclaimed. And we do so, knowing that the work of mission will succeed and that the day will come when there will be a multitude of believers of every tribe and tongue and people and nation standing before the throne of God. (Rev. 5:9)

When the work of mission fails to sufficiently live within the congregation, rather than start with criticising the work we are currently involved in, we would do well to consider whether or not the centrality of the missionary mandate to the church's calling is sufficiently preached, explained and remembered in prayer. The better we understand the church's role in God's work of mission, the more excited our churches will be in fulfilling our missionary task and in observing the fruits of the work of mission not just in "our" mission field but throughout the entire world.

There is more to be said, however. If our engagement with the Great Commission is to be central to who we are as churches, we need to be kept well informed of the work being undertaken. Today there's so

many more ways to be connected to the work we support and pray for than ever before. Most of our missionaries, and also many of the local pastors in the churches we partner with, make good use of FaceBook and other social media platforms, and some even write a blog. Brief updates and prayer points are emailed to us on a regular basis or listed in our church bulletins. We receive the occasional video presentation or even in-person presentations of those whom we send and support. A few months ago I even had the opportunity to hold online Zoom interviews with various missionaries on the field, as part of a youth Bible study group session in my congregation in Melville. (It was very successful by the way!). And the internet also gives us access to broader news and information regarding the countries and places we are praying for.

And then of course there is this magazine, the *Mission News* you are holding in your hands. Through this magazine you and your family can receive more in-depth reports on the mission activities our churches support. By reading this and being more engaged, it is our prayer that over time you might not lose interest but rather grow in your interest and desire for the gospel to go out through the missionaries we send and the fields we support.

When it comes to our engagement with cross cultural mission there are things that can be done to help us be

BRIEF UPDATES AND PRAYER POINTS ARE EMAILED TO US ON A REGULAR BASIS OR LISTED IN OUR BULLETIN.

informed and better engaged. We want our missionaries to give us timely and engaging reports, we want our various mission boards to keep us up to date with what is going on, and we need our ministers to pray consistently and specifically for the work we're supporting. But our engagement with cross cultural mission also comes back to us. We need to *want* to be informed, and to *make* ourselves informed. We need to ask ourselves to what extent we and our churches are shaped and formed by the Great Commission, how much we are concerned for the lost, and to what extent our hearts are on fire for the gospel to be proclaimed. Indeed we need to see how the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations is central to the church's calling and we need to put that into practice. May God cause us to grow in this as we witness the Gospel spread and proclaimed throughout the earth.

**Rev. Stephen 't Hart**



## HOW TO PLANT A CHURCH - (5)

### ESTABLISHING A GROUP

In our series on the Pauline Cycle, we have covered the calling of missionaries, making evangelistic contact, and communicating the gospel. What step do you think is next? What happens after the gospel is communicated?

It is important to remember that even though God promises that his Word will never return empty (Isaiah 55:11) and that it is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), yet it does not always yield the result that we might desire it to have. The parable of the sower is an excellent lesson for this. While the seed of the Word is sown on four different types of soil, there is only one that yields a harvest for the sower (Matthew 13:1-9).

The prayer that must accompany any presentation of the gospel is that it will elicit a response in the hearts of those who hear it. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God for salvation, but it only has an effect through the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts and minds of those who have been chosen by God to respond to that message in faith. While these mysteries are invisible, how they manifest themselves visibly is not only in the changed lives of individuals, but more importantly for our purposes as we discuss church planting, in the formation of a group of believers.

In *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, David Hesselgrave mentions four aspects of this step, Establishing a Group: instruction, motivation, decision, and confession.

As you can imagine, in the initial stages of a church group being formed, instruction is going to be very important. In a context where there is no or little understanding of the gospel, this instruction will likely focus on the basics of the gospel as well as the beginnings of Bible literacy. In most places in Papua New Guinea, instruction in this initial phase is going to be somewhat different, as there is already a general level of understanding about Jesus, the gospel, and the Bible. Perhaps it would be better to say it like this: there is a general level of *misunderstanding* about Jesus, the gospel, and the Bible.

Instruction is important in dealing with these misunderstandings. At this stage, as at all, it is so important to emphasize the Reformed principle of *Sola Scripture*, Scripture alone. All instruction needs to deliberately and self-consciously begin with the Bible.

The next important consideration is motivation. This is another massive issue and one that I am constantly wrestling with in my mind. There are two sides to this matter. The first is the question, "Why is this person or these people coming to this Bible study or worship service? Is the gospel motivating them or something else, such as a desire for money or status? In animistic cultures such as Papua New Guinea, the desire for secret spiritual power, sometimes referred to as *mana*, can be a powerful but difficult to recognize motivation. The other side of motivation has to do with the message that is being communicated. Are the promises of



the gospel being clearly communicated? Is “our only comfort in life and death” at the center of all that is being not only taught formally but also modelled informally in all circumstances?

The third important consideration is decision. Essentially, is the call of the gospel being clearly and constantly communicated so that those who have begun to attend are being challenged to “choose this day whom you will serve”? In our Reformed churches, we are wary of this language about making a decision. One reason is our doctrinal commitment to Calvinism over against Arminianism. Arminianism puts the emphasis for conversion upon man’s ability to choose and make that crucial decision, whereas Calvinism teaches that we are totally unable of ourselves to choose for God and we rely completely on God’s grace. The second reason is that we know of the excesses of Charles Finney and the Second Great Awakening which became fixated on that moment of decision and employed various manipulative methods to move people toward a “decision for Christ.” With these concerns in mind, should Reformed mission work press people to make a decision?

I believe that it should. Firstly, because we see in the ministry of Jesus that he presses his disciples to make a decision, often by asking them questions like, Who do you say that I am (Matthew 16:15)? Do you want to go

away as well (John 6:67)? Where is your faith (Luke 8:25)? Secondly, decision is important because of the nature of faith. Faith is not like a virus that you catch if you spend enough time with other people who have it. Yes, faith is a gift of God, but faith must be exercised by those who have it. Faith in Christ requires making certain commitments to Him—committing to set Him apart in your heart as Lord, committing to take up your cross and follow Him, committing to trust in His atonement for your forgiveness, etc. Since this commitment requires a decision (the Cambridge English Dictionary even defines commitment as “a firm decision”), then we should not be shy about the need for those who were previously apart from Christ to make a decision to repent, believe, and follow Christ, even as we recognize of course that the ability to do this comes entirely from God, just as all the glory for it also belongs to Him.

This discussion of decision leads quite naturally to the fourth important consideration in the early formation of a group, which is confession. The call to confess Christ is all over the New Testament (Romans 10:9, Philippians 2:11, Hebrews 13:15). While there is a need for every Christian to confess Christ at all times, what we are talking about here is the need for a new Christian to make a public confession of their faith in Christ as a way of signalling their break with their sinful past and also their heartfelt conviction going forward. For new Christians, this confession will accompany baptism, since “by baptism we are received into the church of God and set

apart from all other peoples and false religions, to be entirely committed to him whose mark and emblem we bear” (Belgic Confession, Article 34).

In PNG we hold on to public profession of faith, that public confession of Christ, as an important aspect of our work. I was privileged to be present in Wantun when three women joined the congregation through public profession of faith. Since all of them had been baptized as infants, none of them were baptized at that time, although the young children of two of them were. While in Australia we are used to hearing a simple, “I do” as the promise that is given in response to the questions, in Wantun each woman responded differently. I can still hear the one woman, who is otherwise very quiet and soft-spoken, stating loudly and with conviction, “I promise to remain a member of this church and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ here until the day that I die!” Beautiful! Her words have often encouraged me as we have worked through various struggles in the development of the Wantun congregation.

Instruction, motivation, decision, and confession are especially important in the initial stages of a new church plant, even though they remain relevant throughout as new members join. It is important to remember that we are talking about the initial stages of the church plant here, especially because this step is easily confused with Step 6, Building up the Congregation. But before we get there, next time we will consider Step 5, Gathering in Worship.

**Pastor Ryan deJonge**

R.C.B.C.

## COLLEGE CORNER



## HEALTH SERVICES

I'm not too sure what the current state of affairs is with the health services in western countries, what I do know is that here in PNG the health system is pretty much non-existent. A quick search on the Internet revealed the following statistics which show what pressure doctors are under over here. In Australia there is one doctor for 285 people, in PNG there is one doctor for 20,000 people! (Equal 4<sup>th</sup> worst in the world.) The men and women who work in the health services over here are amazing and are trying their best to provide a service even though they don't have many resources.

You can imagine that going to the hospital will result in a long wait time. Not so long ago I dropped off a student with her baby, who had suffered what appeared to be an epileptic fit, and nine hours later I got a phone call asking if she could be picked up, even though she hadn't been attended to as yet. It meant she had to come in again the next day to keep waiting. It's not

surprising then, that many people don't go to the hospital to get treatment as they often can't make it there, and secondly, if they get there, they have to wait too long anyway. The result is you see quite a few tragic cases where, for example, broken bones have healed but they haven't been set straight, and so the person loses functionality in that limb.

With the latest outbreak of Covid in PNG you don't need to be a rocket scientist to work out the enormous challenge faced by the doctors. It's a losing battle. It highlights how fortunate the west is to have such a well-resourced and well-funded health system. So, the next time you have to wait a long time before being attended to, please think of your brothers and sisters here in PNG, and may that help you sit patiently for a little longer.

Here at the bible college we continue to experience our LORD's blessings everyday. We experience peace and freedom and good health. The grounds look beautiful, and every morning we awake to hundreds of birds whistling. It is truly amazing to hear the birds sing praises to God. We are truly blessed.

The students continue to be a joy to teach. At the moment we are busy teaching children's ministries which is a course designed to help students become good Sunday school teachers. For a lot of the students, this course is exactly the reason why they came to the Bible College so that they could pick up the necessary skills to be more effective as Sunday school teachers in their church. It's been great fun teaching them how to prepare a lesson, and also how to use their voice, and their whole body as they tell the story. There have been a lot of laughs, at my expense, as we explored the various ways of making the story come alive. Two students have to make a presentation before each lesson and then they are critiqued by myself, and I must say that they are doing very well. It is certainly a privilege to be involved in all of this.

One of our students, Elish, gave birth to a healthy baby girl [PHOTO RIGHT] during the second teaching block. Here in PNG it seems as if though parents think of names after the



## INTRODUCING: PENINAH HANNAH



child is born. It was no different this time; Apa and Elish thought long and hard about a name before calling their daughter Peninah Hannah. Apa posted this on facebook, which I found to be quite a testimony:

“Thank you, Lord, to Lord be the glory. Names are very important. It tells a story of who we are, what we shall be and become. Therefore, as parents when naming our children, we should think very carefully before naming our children, how the name will impact on our children as they grow up, especially in this world of inequality. Welcome Peninah Hannah Moses ..... as family we love you so much...short form, we can call her Penny.”

Isn't that beautiful?

As I write this, we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Rev Hans Vaatstra, his wife Lisa and son Leo. They have their visas and, if the Lord wills, will be working with us for at least three years. This is an answer to prayer. We also have a guest lecturer arriving from the URC in Lynden, Rev Melvin Dotinga along with his wife Jane. Their arrival means that Liz and I can take a break and go and see our children and grandchildren in Canada. Again, as we have been taught so powerfully during this Covid pandemic, this will only happen if the Lord wills. Flying internationally at this time is very challenging and a number of flight changes have emphasised how quickly the situation can change. We leave it in the LORD's hands and that gives us peace.

**In Christ alone,**

**Mark Mulder.**

# Armadale Mission Board

## CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

A new Era?  
Moving? Change on  
the horizon? Waiting?  
Approvals? I have  
never titled the  
Chairman's Musing; I am  
not sure I have ever  
written them with a certain  
theme. Today I won't title  
this musing, but it will have  
the theme of the above  
mentioned questions. The  
only real question is: where  
to start?

Approvals? I thought to start  
with Approvals. Writing this on  
the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, the past week  
was a great week for news on  
the approval front! First, a  
WhatsApp message came from  
Pastor Ryan stating, "We are all  
approved". Fantastic news!  
Hopefully by the time you are  
reading this musing, the  
DeJonge family are either in  
transit or already in RCBC doing  
their two week home quarantine.

So what other approval is  
required? Of course the  
approval of Pastor David. Pastor  
David received news the following  
day that his work permit was  
approved! Praise God! Now he  
and his family must wait for all the  
visas for the family and approval  
to enter by the emergency  
coordinator and they too will be  
headed off to PNG, the Lord  
Willing.

Waiting? Yes we are all waiting for  
the birth of the child of Br and Sr  
Ben and Merinda. We pray that  
the Lord will bless the birth as He



will it, in due time. We also  
wait for all 3 families to be  
joined on the field to continue to  
work in the harvest that is  
indeed plentiful.

A new Era? The Free  
Reformed Church of Armadale  
has been the sending church for  
the work in PNG for basically a  
whole generation (20 years).  
Interestingly, the Board just held  
its 100<sup>th</sup> Board meeting and its  
last meeting with the Armadale  
consistory. Now, with the  
change to Southern River, a  
new Era starts, and we hope  
and pray it looks much like the  
last Era! God has indeed  
blessed the work of Armadale,  
so we pray that He blesses the  
work of Southern River.

Moving? Some of the readers  
might have picked up on some  
consistory reports in the District  
Bulletin that there was a  
proposal called the "highlands  
proposal". This proposal was  
presented at the last supporting  
and co-operating meeting and it  
was approved by all the  
co-operating churches. This  
proposal basically means that  
we will move our home location  
from 11-mile (at Lae City  
Mission) to a somewhat

westernised town in the  
highlands named Ukarumpa.  
Ukarumpa is a lot closer to the  
new church plants in the high-  
lands, whilst still being quite  
accessible to Wantun and even  
Lae. Hopefully in the next  
Mission News we can flesh this  
out a little more and show some  
maps of the change. The  
thought process is that we will  
still 'hang on' to 11-mile, how-  
ever the majority of the work  
will now come out from  
Ukarumpa.

Change on the Horizon?  
Another important decision  
made at the Co-Operating  
meeting was a holistic  
approach to the Mission work in  
PNG, that is, not just to focus  
on our own little patch, but to  
work more and more with  
RCNZ and CANRC in the work  
at PNG. Whilst the board is  
tasked with putting a little more  
information together to explain  
how this will work, it was truly a  
blessing to see the support  
from the churches for this  
holistic approach. Again, once  
things start to become clear, we  
can hopefully explain what will  
be happening in the Mission  
News. The Mission Board  
appreciates the close working



relation we have with New Zealand and Canada and prays that it may continue for many more generations in connection to PNG.

So, a new Era? Moving? Change on the Horizon? Waiting? Approvals? Yes, many questions. Some answered, some still to be answered, but what is so amazing is that we can do this to the honour and glory of God's name. May He bless the efforts of the workers on the field, the board, the churches and especially at this time the indigenous churches in Lae so that His name be praised and glorified.

Prayer points:

- Pray for churches in PNG so that they may be blessed by hearing the preaching every Sunday.
- Pray that God will be with Pastor Ryan and Ruth as they prepare to travel back to PNG.
- Pray that God will be with Pastor David and the family as they continue to prepare themselves to take up the task in PNG.
- Pray for Ben and Merinda as they await the birth of their child.
- Pray for the exciting developments on the field, especially the move to Ukarumpa.

**Frank Janssen**

**Chairman Armadale Mission Board**

## West Timor

### NEW HOPE (HARAPAN BARU)

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



### SEROJA...

**We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.**

**2 Corinthians 4:8-9**

One of the best sleeps to be had is when it's pouring rain outside, that comfy feeling that just wants you to pull up the blankets and stay in bed. Such was the weather on Saturday April 3<sup>rd</sup>. All day long it rained heavily with strong gusts of wind, the weather report predicted that this rain would continue for the next couple of days. Surprisingly Easter morning the rain had let up somewhat, and during the morning service the sun even peeked through the clouds. We were just about to enjoy a Sunday cup of coffee and birthday donuts for Aizaach, when our papaya tree came crashing down upon our kitchen roof. The wind had definitely picked up again and the sky looked menacing. Half an hour later it was

raining more heavily than ever and the fury of the wind increased to such a degree that we started to worry about the waving palm trees in our yard.

All sorts of things from toys to furniture were flying through the air, whereas water was flooding our veranda. The boys tried as much as possible to keep the water from coming into the house by sweeping it out but this proved to be a never ending battle. As they were sweeping they noticed a group of the STAKRI students huddled together in our front lawn. Turns out, that a tree had come crashing down on the dormitory roof sending them into such a scare that they figured the safest place was an open space. Well, with a wind speed of 85 km per hour, not exactly! They all came up into our house and changed into dry clothes. At this point the power had

## SEROJA—NEW HOPE *(continued)*

gone off as well as the cell phone connections.

At night, the New Hope house parents had tried to connect with us for their situation was more desperate than that of ours. New Hope is located on the flat coastal land about two kilometers away from the Ocean shore. A creek runs behind the home that carries all the rainwater coming down from the mountains toward the ocean. A combination of so much rain and high waves rolling in from the Ocean is ideal ground for a flashflood, thus the Search and Rescue Team evacuated all people living on the flat areas to grounds higher up.

Opa, (Ed's foster dad) who is in his nineties, lives in his home in front of the New Hope grounds. When the call came to evacuate he insisted on staying at home to look after things and locked himself inside his room. The house parents were the last to leave with a very heavy heart. Once they got to the Dalam Tuak church, which is an official evacuation point, they shared that Opa had refused to come, Tony and Adi, two New Hope residents insisted that they would run to our house to let us know about Opa. A very dangerous undertaking and we are very thankful that the Lord kept them safe.

Equipped with prayer, machetes and flashlights, my husband, Moses, Micah, two

STAKRI students hopped into the car to start the journey down the mountain. They had to stop multiple times to remove trees, hack off branches, pull away electricity cables and maneuvering shaky bridges to make it to Opa's house only to find out that Opa's daughter had already been successful in persuading Opa to come stay with her!

A huge tree had come down on the New Hope girl's dormitory, we are so thankful that no one was in the building at that time and that all were safe in the church.

On our way back they stopped by at the church to assess the situation, offer comfort and pray with the people gathered there. From there they stopped by at STAKRI and the Reformed Sahabat FM radio station, what a devastation! STAKRI's roof had been blown off, huge trees had been uprooted and crashed into the radio station building and the station's tower had toppled leaving a tangled mess. I was so disappointed to see everything ravaged and could quite well identify with how Job might have felt. All in all it took the boys 3 hours to make this normally 15 minute drive back home!

I was very grateful to see them and the car back in one piece. In their absence, another tree had come down on the dormitory roof, making it impossible for the students to go back to their rooms. Cooking down there without power was also out of the question and so a few extra





cups of rice were added to Aizaach's birthday meal! At around five o'clock, the winds died down somewhat in severity and the furious rain turned into a calmer steady rain instead. We figured we had passed the peak of the storm. We cranked up the generator and several families came to our house to have their cell phones and flashlights charged and of course talk about the damage done by Seroja. Although greatly saddened by the devastation and destruction all around, we were relieved that it was all over...or so we thought. We went to bed early that night, exhausted from the happenings of the day. This rest was very short lived as at 11 o'clock we were awakened by a loud crash coming from our rooftop exhaust fan being blown off. The storm was back in full fury, it was pitch dark and all we could do was pray to our Heavenly Father to keep us and our loved ones safe. We did not get a wink of sleep that night, finally at around five in the morning the wind and the rain once again died down slowly. That morning we made the rounds to survey the damage in our area. Homes had lost roofs, windows broken, so many trees had toppled, riverbeds had doubled in size, bridges were out, cables and wires looked like spider webs dangling all over the place, what a chaos!

It took about a month to clean up and for the electricity to be restored. As roads became accessible again the ministers and evangelists came from the different churches and mission posts in the remote areas all had similar stories of damage and destruction.

These last two years have been very difficult for the people here, many are hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down.

As God's ambassadors, this is where our task lies, to bring a message of hope and comfort only to be found in our Savior Jesus Christ.



#### Prayer Request:

- Sahabat Radio Station for the building, tower and transmitter to be restored so that God's word can be proclaimed through this powerful tool
- New Hope dormitory to be rebuilt.
- New Hope Children to be encouraged and have hope for their future despite all the disturbances going on in their lives.
- The Farmers, many of whom have lost another harvest.
- New Hope resident Helmy, who received surgery to amputate a 6<sup>th</sup> finger on her right hand because of gangrene. (More about Helmy as well in the next update)

- Joram, a severely malnourished 5 month old baby boy from the Nawen Mission Post, who is currently hospitalized and faces a long road of recuperation. (Photo above & more about Joram in the next update)

Thank you for your support, encouragement and prayer,

**Blessings,**

**Femmy Dethan-Bouwman**





## Rockingham/Baldivis Mission

### INDONESIAN MISSION COMMITTEE

Serving the consistories and congregations of the Free Reformed Church of Rockingham and Baldivis  
PO Box 531 Rockingham, Western Australia 6168

#### June 2021

Welcome back readers! As promised here is the concluding chapter of the mission trip by Grant Bosveld & me to Bali & Java. At the conclusion of the last article, we had just arrived in Solo after a very boring trip down the brand-new concrete tollway in Java. As mentioned, we were warmly greeted by our host family who were of Chinese origin (names withheld for security reasons). There was a large house filled with exotic furniture and many boxes of foodstuff which they distributed throughout Indonesia. Clearly it was a successful enterprise, and the entire family was involved in the business. Being a Friday

evening, we were taken out for a traditional banquet style dinner by our hosts. Our Sumba delegates were clearly impressed by the variety, quality, and amount of food on offer.

Unfortunately, much of the conversation was in Indonesian and although we struggled to follow the dialogue, by constantly interrupting rev Yanto for translation we managed to learn much from our hosts and their particular church situation. (more about this later)

We arrived back home at around 10.30pm, and by the time 5 men had lined up for the solitary shower/wc it was close to midnight before we hit the sack! Sometime that

evening, someone had come up with the brilliant suggestion to see the sunrise from a popular tourist spot. That sounded nice we thought, not realizing that this involved a 3-hour trip by car and required a 2.30am start. Remember that the previous night we had not had any sleep due to the heat & mosquitos, and now we were expected to make do with 2.5 hrs. To say we were bleary eyed next morning is an understatement! Oh, and another thing, nobody told us that at the end of this 3-hour trip we were expected to climb a mountain in almost pitch darkness to reach the viewing point!!! This took another 45 minutes and was particularly difficult for Rev Anton who struggles to walk normally after a serious motorbike accident, which caused him to lose a significant portion of his foot. Anyway, the viewing spot was indeed spectacular, overlooking a valley towards two volcanos between which the sun was expected to rise. By 6.30 am there had to be close to 2000 people eagerly anticipating this cosmic event. Their enthusiasm wasn't even dampened by the cloudy and misty weather that prevented us actually seeing the sunrise, the sun not making an appearance until well over the top of the volcanos!

From our vantage point we could see a strange looking building far down below in the valley and we asked our host about it. No problem I will take you there he said cheerfully. Some time and quite a few kilometers later we arrived at the bottom of a large and very steep hill where we parked the



Waiting for the sunrise Central Java

car. "On foot from here" was the advice given. Really?? Give us a break! But we were there now, so we started our trek uphill. Rev Anton was privileged to ride in a WW2 era jeep available to those for whom the physical exertion was too great. The walk was around 500 meters in total and once we finally arrived, we were astonished to see a huge building in the shape of a large chook, resting contentedly in the lush grounds. On closer inspection it appeared to be a church or large chapel of some sort. We were told that a local Christian man had claimed to have received a vision from God, who had instructed him to start building a church in the form of a Dove. (can be found on Google by typing in "Chicken Church Indonesia") Striking how similar his claim was to the biblical account of God speaking to Noah! After many years and numerous setbacks this building was finally finished, and now functions as

a center for reflection and prayer but is open to all religions, including Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. Maybe I am a bit cynical, but I don't really believe that he received this vision from God at all! Inside, the building was a cavernous space with a mezzanine 2<sup>nd</sup> floor at each end, at the tail and beak sections. Large prints with various texts & sayings from all religions adorned the walls, and at was rather sad, and telling, to see the Christian text in large bold letters "IF YOU CAN'T GET WHAT YOU WANT...PRAY!! AND KEEP ON PRAYING UNTIL YOU GET IT! Sadly, that is the attitude towards God in many of the Christian churches in Indonesia, where God is seen as lucky charm or talisman, and you will get your desire if you rub hard enough!

As someone famous once said, "from the weird to the



The Chicken Church

View from inside



From Left,  
Evangelist Endrow, Rev Balla, E de Haan, our Hosts,  
G Bosveld, Rev Anton, Rev Yanto



## Climbing the 500 steps to futility

ridiculous” or something to that effect! Since we were in the vicinity of something internationally important, our host compelled us to visit the most famous tourist attraction in all of Indonesia. By this time, we had had quite enough of tourist attractions thank you very much! but not wanting to offend our host we grudgingly went along. Also, it was a very-very long walk back to his place! The day was now stifling hot, and our next port of call was the World Heritage listed, and famous temple complex at Borobudur. This Buddhist temple was constructed between 780 -840AD and was not discovered by westerners until 1814. It is now considered one of the wonders of the archeological world. A quick internet search reveals that *“The physical movement of devotees circumambulating (walking around) the structure symbolizes the non-physical - or spiritual - path*



*of enlightenment.”* I must say that while it is clearly a feat of craftsmanship on a massive scale, I did not feel very enlightened climbing the 500 steps to the top, nor indeed walking around the ramparts in the 45+ degree heat, caused by the black stone walls and innumerable statues and motifs of Buddha. Standing at the top and looking down at all the

thousands of devotees to Buddha visiting this massive site, along with countless other tourists, I just felt incredibly sad that so much effort had gone into building this monument to a non-existent god. Sadder still was witnessing the thousands of adoring visiting pilgrims, each seeking enlightenment that they will never achieve. It

really brought home the sheer scale of the mission work required to bring the Christian Gospel to predominantly heathen nations.

By the time we returned to our place of lodging it was evening and we were treated to a delicious but dare I say overly spicy meal. After dinner we spent a few hours preparing for Sunday worship by familiarising ourselves with the songs to be included in tomorrow’s liturgy. [see photo page 16]. As the church group was not yet familiar with the psalms and hymns normally sung by the GGRI churches, we were to act as leaders in the singing of praise to God. Sunday morning came after a restful night’s sleep (at last). Church began at 8.30am and was held near the home of one of the members, in a covered alley between some houses. [see photo page 16]. Although this was a public thoroughfare, the locals respected that a worship service was in progress, and we



Borobudur Central java



remained largely undisturbed. The group of 50 or so believers had previously belonged to one of the Stephen Tong churches and had left after some theological dispute. They had made contact with Rev Yanto Muriwali in Malang after hearing of him through his radio ministry, and upon discovering that there was another Reformed church in Indonesia, they requested to join the GGRI, albeit as a mission post under the supervision of GGRI Kataka. It was clear that they had a more evangelical background, as there was a dedicated worship team with singers and musicians (piano, guitar and tambourine), and portions of the service not involving preaching such as announcements, prayers, and bible readings were led by congregation members some of whom were women. Rev Yanto Muriwali preached a sermon which was attentively listened to by all. Br. Endrow was introduced as their appointed evangelist, and 2 other men were also installed in a supporting role to Endrow. Rev Anton performed the duties as chairman of the supporting church in Kataka. This group is largely self-supporting and have the capacity to cater for the needs of Ev Endrow, and as such we were not asked to financially support this post.

Clearly the work of introducing a more Reformed style of worship and liturgy will be a key function of the work facing Endrow, but this is also acknowledged as a need by the group themselves, having been exposed to the preaching, encouragement, and support of Rev Yanto, who had

visited this group monthly for the preceding 6 months. Endrow will also be teaching catechism to both the youth and older members, with this teaching to take place on Sunday afternoons, in place of a 2<sup>nd</sup> organized worship service in the interim. Prior to the time of our visit only 1 service was being held, there being no regular ordained or competent preacher.

After worship concluded, tables and chairs were rearranged, and a substantial meal was shared by all. We really enjoyed the fellowship with this tight-knit group and after promising to stay in touch we bade our farewells. We were confronted by the reality that Java is used to a 7-day work week when after arriving "home" we noticed that some of the family members of our host, and a number of the worship group had kept their business open on Sunday, and after church went about their normal daily business. Later that afternoon when we were expected to share a meal together at home, we were surprised to be heading out yet again to a restaurant. It seems that hardly anyone ever eats at home, and the notion of a whole Sabbath day rest is still a foreign concept even among Christians. We pray that Endrow together with support from rev Yanto & the supporting GGRI Churches will be able to effectively bring the gospel, and with it a clear understanding of what God wants from us in our Spiritual life and worship. As with most visits to new mission posts we were asked to provide

We pray they are able to understand the gospel and know what God wants from us in our spiritual life and worship.

them with financial support to build a new church building. Unfortunately living, and building in Java, is not as cheap as in Sumba, and we had to graciously decline their request, which was probably 10 times the amount required to build a church in Sumba. We were sad to leave this wonderful group of people who are clearly still struggling to come to terms with their new GGRI Reformed identity. The fact that they, after coming from a rich and powerful church, are willing to be placed under the care of a poor church federation in Sumba, which is considered by many in Indonesia to be a cultural backwater, is testament to their desire to serve God faithfully. Please pray that evangelist Endrow is able to

## Rehearsing for Sunday



## Part of worship group Solo Java

provide strong leadership and solid teaching, so that in time, a faithful, committed Christian church can be established in the midst of Java.

How to sum up this visit?

Clearly this had not been a “run of the mill” mission trip. Visiting mission posts along with the delegates from Kataka has its advantages, as matters can be discussed directly, and our input given on the spot. On the flip side, the Indonesian delegates spent most of their time in discussions to which we were not privy, especially in the case of Solo, which is not part of our responsibility, and this has the effect of seemingly lessening the value of our presence. The fact that

we seemed to be spending a lot of time playing tourist, didn't help. We would have liked to spend more time in discussions with them in Bali, Malang & Dampit however circumstances prevented this. We needed to remind ourselves that merely by being present and showing an interest in the Solo group, helped them feel less alienated and remote from the main church in Sumba, and we were told that they did receive encouragement, knowing that the churches as far away as Australia had a genuine interest in their circumstances and faith life. We also can't always expect to see the positive outcomes on every occasion that we visit. We are called to do our task humbly in service to God, and He will grant whatever increase He sees fit, for the benefit of His church and the coming of His kingdom. That should be sufficient for us.

Next time we hope to bring you some detailed information regarding the recent damage caused by cyclone Seroja in Sumba, and our collective response to this disaster.

**On behalf of Mission Indonesia,**

**Eric de Haan**

## THE FIRST MARK AND MISSION

Of the Belgic Confession's articles on the doctrine of the church, article 29 is probably the most well-known amongst Reformed church members. It describes the marks of the true and false church. First among the marks of a true church is "the pure preaching of the gospel." What does this mean for mission? What does this mean for our churches in relation to the lost around us in our own communities?

### Historical Background

In the early 1950s, the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) was beginning to develop a deeper conviction about its responsibility to spread the gospel at home and overseas. To be sure, missionary consciousness was part of the CRC's fabric from its beginning in 1857. Initially, prayerful and financial support were given to Dutch and South African mission works. It took some time for the CRC to develop its own missionary efforts. There were extensive discussions at early CRC Synods about whether mission should be a denominational, classis, or local affair. Eventually, the CRC settled on a denominational approach to mission. The CRC Synod of 1880 appointed their first missions committee, then called the "Board of Heathen Missions." In 1888, the decision was made to begin mission work among the American Indians. In 1896, the CRC finally began work among

the Navajo and Zuni peoples of the American Southwest.

The CRC began overseas work in Nigeria a few decades later. It was one of the missionaries to Nigeria who really began to stir up discussions about mission in the CRC. Unfortunately, Rev. Harry Boer would go on to become infamous for his objections to certain points in the Canons of Dort, but for our interests here, we can note his role in stimulating CRC interest in spreading the gospel in the mid-twentieth century.

In 1952, a Christian Reformed consistory overtured the CRC Synod to "to draw up a creedal statement concerning missions." The CRC Synod declined to do so, on the grounds that "The work of Missions is included in the connotation of the first mark of the church, namely 'the faithful preaching of the Word.'" This was the earliest rumblings of dissatisfaction in the CRC with the Three Forms of Unity regarding mission -- a history that I have traced and evaluated in one of the chapters of *For the Cause of the Son of God*. Interestingly, the CRC Synod appealed to article 29 of the Belgic Confession. Speaking through its Synod, the CRC in this era considered that the Belgic Confession spoke to the missionary task of the church.

However, this was not a unanimously held position in the CRC. Later in 1952, Harry Boer published his response to the Synod's decision. He pointed out that the CRC edition of the Belgic Confession then in use did not support the grounds for this decision. The relevant part of article 29 of that edition reads, "The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the Gospel is preached therein..." Boer built his case on the word "therein." He noted that the earlier Dutch and Latin translations did not have that word. He did not mention the earliest French editions of 1561/62, but they do not have it either. While Boer was wrong about the Belgic Confession in many respects, he did get this correct. There was a problem here with the old CRC edition of the Confession.

When the CRC published a new edition in 1985, this problem was corrected. The Canadian Reformed Churches also had "therein" in their first English edition. I suspect that it originally came from the English text adopted by the CRC in 1912. But when a new edition of the Confession was adopted by the CanRC in 1983, "therein" was gone.

Several North American Reformed churches continue to use the English text that basically dates back to 1912 and includes "therein" in article 29. Among



these are the Heritage Reformed, the Free Reformed, the Protestant Reformed and the Reformed Church in the United States. Until this is corrected, Boer's point sticks among these brethren: one cannot appeal to the first mark of the true church in article 29 as a place where the Belgic Confession speaks about mission.

### **Biblical and Reformed = Missional**

One might also ask whether it is even biblical to restrict the mark of a true church to what goes on in established congregations in their public worship services. This is a place where the original 1561 Belgic Confession can help us. Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission, is one of the proof texts for this statement in the original confession as penned by Guido de Brès. In that passage, our Lord Jesus sends his disciples out to preach, teach, and disciple "all nations." Through those disciples, our Lord was also sending out his church of all ages and places. Clearly the original intent of the Belgic Confession was to include the missionary calling of the church under the first mark. A church that does not faithfully proclaim the gospel inside **and outside** its membership has a credibility problem when it comes to being a true church.

The Reformed churches in the days of de Brès understood this well. Being Reformed meant being outward looking. It meant looking outwards and seeing the vast numbers of

lost people who needed the gospel because they did not have Christ and were heading for hell. It meant that the pastors were compelled by love to take seriously the charge of Paul to Timothy: "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). And they did.

But this outward looking orientation indicated by article 29 was not limited to pastors. Martyrology is a genre of religious literature dedicated to the stories of those who have been martyred for their faith. The most well-known in English is *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. The first Reformed martyrology was written in French by Jean Crespin in 1554. In that first edition, as well as in subsequent ones, Crespin described not only the martyrdoms of Reformed pastors, but of many Reformed church members. They were often killed for sharing the biblical gospel with friends and neighbours. Compelled by love, they could not keep silent. Among them were believers who had been pastored by de Brès, including at least one entire family, the Ogviers of Lille.

According to our Belgic Confession, the navel-gazing, self-obsessed church places a question mark behind its status as a true church. The ghetto mentality is not Reformed. When we're labelled "the frozen chosen" and we deserve it, we're not being faithful to either our confessions or Scripture. Instead, being Reformed means being missional, not only in terms of sending out missionaries to distant lands, but being outward looking and caring about the lost who need the gospel.

**By Wes Bredenhof**



## *Birthday Corner*

### *June*

Rev. Cornelis Kleijn  
09/06/1981

Matthew DeJonge  
18/06/2008

Isaac VanderWal  
25/06/2011

### *July*

~

### *August*

Abigail DeJonge  
12/08/2014

Nikolas vanderWal  
13/08/2009

Madison vanderWal  
15/08/2015

Jonathan Kleijn  
19/08/2008

## Kids Page - PRAYING FOR MISSION KIDS

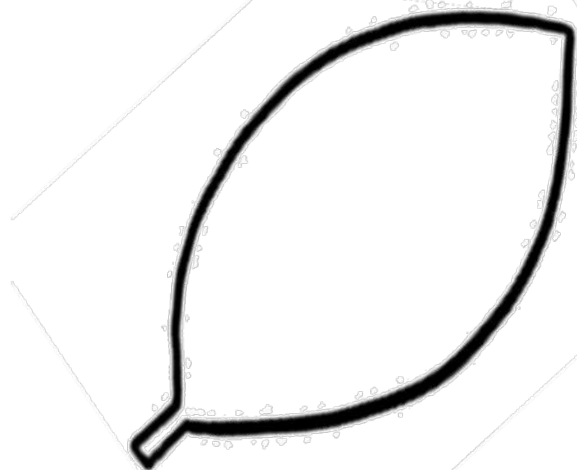
Missionary kids must have lots of fun going to new places and making new friends. It must also be hard sometimes, leaving behind old friends, getting comfortable in a strange culture, eating different foods, doing school differently.

Maybe you can try imagine moving to a completely new country and all the exciting things you could see and do. Also try and think about what the hard things might be. Mission leaders and parents need our prayers and so do the kids! When we put our hands together to pray, God hears us. Make a prayer tree like the one below and fill it with prayers for missionary kids (some prayer points may be: keep the kids safe; help them find new friends; help them at a new school).



Trace your wrist and hand on a piece of paper so it looks like a tree trunk. Then cut out shapes like leaves to stick on your tree (below are some cut outs you could use).

On each leaf write down something you can pray about for missionary kids. You could colour in the leaves different colours to make it nice and bright!





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Rev Markus Ndihi Jawa - Tanabanas  
Rev Yan Pariamalinga - Bali  
Rev Balla Rihi - Maubukul  
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Br Arison Pekambani - LaAu  
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Mission News Magazine for the Mission and Mission Aid activities of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

Mission News is published bi-monthly.

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