

Partnership

the newsletter of Mission Partners AUTUMN 2012

The Australian Presbyterian World Mission

www.missionpartners.org.au

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What the Media Won't Tell You...

Sometimes you pick up the newspaper and read 2-3 articles about Christianity and in one way or another they are pretty negative. As you close the newspaper you feel discouraged and think that the church is clearly going backwards. But by it's very nature our media loves to tell us bad news. So here's the news. The church IS growing. Across the world there are thousands of people every day who turn to Christ for salvation.

So think on this. In the early 1990's there were a couple of thousand believers in one country in East Asia. Today it's thought that there are 80,000-100,000 believers. Then think of Africa. When John Wilson from Victoria visited Malawi last year he went to a number of villages where people lacked some of the most basic needs for living. What did they ask for? Not food but Bibles! Think about the Middle East. The media won't tell you about the hundreds, even thousands of Muslims who have become believers in recent years through the unrest in the region and the ministry of satellite television and radio broadcasts. There are parts of the world where the church buildings just can't cope with the number of people who want to meet! But you won't read this in the newspaper or hear about it in the news.

When the Word of God goes out it achieves the very thing that God intends for it (Isaiah 55:11). It is more accurate than a laser-guided missile. How did this all happen? People left their home country and went to another culture with the Word of God. Sometimes a missionary ends their term of service and when they return home it can seem that they didn't achieve much at all. But God is at work and in His time His Word will do its work.

This shouldn't surprise us. Jesus said *I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (Matthew 16:18) Yet, if we are honest, there are times when we don't think that the church is progressing but actually going backwards. Do we actually believe the words of Jesus?

Please take heart. The good news is that God's purposes will be achieved. They cannot fail. The gospel is going out to the ends of the earth. That's the news. Remember, as we pray and support the work of mission we are investing in the Kingdom that cannot fail.



Meal for Mission

For a number of years we have asked churches to take part in "Mission Challenge". However, following feedback from churches, the Mission Partners Executive has decided to revert to the old name for this project "Meal for Mission".

What is 'Meal for Mission'? It's an opportunity for a local congregation to deliberately focus on the work of cross-cultural mission both here and overseas through ministries such as that of:

Rick and Kayleen Manton serving the Indigenous people in Mount Druitt, Sydney;

Martin Eagle, serving with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Myanmar;

Andy & Rosemary Williamson and **Glen & Rachael Connor** and **Andrew & Marilyn Schache** serving at the Talua Ministry Training Centre, Vanuatu;

John and Rosemary Evans preparing to serve in Japan;

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Timor;

The Staff in our National Office.

We ask churches to pray for these ministries and for each member, where possible, to contribute the cost of one meal for the cause of ministry in cross-cultural settings.

More details for parishes will be mailed out soon.

Workpartners Vanuatu 2012

For the last few years we have sent two different types of workparties to Vanuatu - 'Youthpartners' for younger people and 'Tradespartners' for older, more experienced volunteers. However, over the last few years this distinction has become blurred and so from now on we will be calling both these workparties the general name "Workpartners".

So what's in store for Workpartners 2012?

Workpartners 6-22 July, 2012 has two teams:

Paama Island: building a Presbytery Resource Centre

Talua Ministry Training Centre: renovations to a staff house.

Cost approximately \$2,000. We suggest that participants pay 1/3 themselves, approach their church seeking a contribution of 1/3 and then fundraise the remaining 1/3.

Who can go? committed Christians, minimum age 15 years (Talua) and 18 years (Paama).

Interested in joining one of the teams?

Get in early as numbers are limited.

Contact Mission Partners (02) 9792 1373 or national@missionpartners.org.au www.missionpartners.org.au for an application form.

Please note that we also plan to send a Workpartners team to each site from 6th-24th December, 2012.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9)

Christmas Catalogue

Thank you to those who 'bought' items from our Christmas Catalogue which helped our brothers and sisters in Myanmar. We raised over \$15,000 as follows: 163 mosquito nets, 185 bags of rice, 116 education expenses for a child, 41 stationery packs for a rural school, 20 medical supplies and 36 book resources for the Reformed Bible Institute, 41 vitamins for a rural village, 10 generators for a rural village and one computer for the Reformed Bible Institute.

We plan to have another Christmas Catalogue this year and will be expanding it to offer items for sale to help our brothers and sisters in East Timor.

They're Off!

In the last few months we've commissioned a number of people for overseas service:

'L & C' (Gracepoint, NSW) Pioneers, East Asia.

'R' (East Blacktown, NSW) AIM International, Africa.

Debra Chen (Drummoyno, NSW) Pioneers, Thailand. Debra has a blog which can be found at <http://plaaplaaplaa.blogspot.com.au/>

Fiona Lockett (Crossroads, TAS) SIM, Chile. Fiona has a blog which can be found at <http://chapterthe2nd.blogspot.com.au>

In a recent post Fiona writes "It's hard to convey how intense this experience is. I mean, others tried to explain it to me before and I didn't understand till now. Landing in this alien-looking place has been a real shock, and then I start to think about practicalities and wonder how I could go about life here: how I would know what to look for in the cramped cornerstores; which bus to catch where I want to go; and where you go to get a document scanned. People tell me things I need to know and, while I appreciate and need their help, it adds to the sea of new things. I'm living with a (wonderful, wonderful) family and when they tell me it's time for breakfast, I don't know if I need to wait for them or not, or how I'm supposed to eat the bread rolls and chile salsa waiting on the table. It's like the thought of drowning: every detail around me is strange and new. In truth a lot of things are the same, but so much is new the familiar goes unnoticed."



Debra Chen



Fiona Lockett

Prayer Directory 2012-13

We hope that by the time this Autumn 2012 edition of 'Partnership' goes to print, our 2012-2013 Prayer Directory will be at the printers. Our aim is to distribute the Directory to congregations throughout Australia. It will be slim so that you can easily keep it with your Bible and it will be free. Because of the sensitive nature of some of the content we ask that it not be left on the back table of the church building. Instead, we ask that it be given out by hand to those people in the congregation who are interested in praying for God's mission throughout the world.

The information about each of our missionaries will be fairly basic. This can be supplemented with the prayer points in our bi-monthly "Email Update".

If you would like to receive 'Email Update' then please email national@missionpartners.org.au with your email address & phone number, together with the name of your minister and their phone number – this is so that we can verify that you attend a Presbyterian Church.

Building Partnerships

We currently have missionaries who are available to visit churches to build partnerships

David and Georgina Newmarch, (Tregear, NSW) CMS South Asia.

J & R (Camden, NSW) SIM, East Asia

Andrew and Marilyn Schache (South Toowoomba, QLD) Mission Partners, Talua Ministry Training Centre, Vanuatu.

If you would like to have them speak at your church, or if you would like to know how to partner with them then please contact us.



Andrew and Marilyn

John and Rose Evans

John and Rose Evans continue to visit churches as they build partnerships to enable them to head to Japan in 2012. To date they have raised 67% of the support needed before they can leave Australia. If you would like to find out more about how you can partner with the Evans family then please contact us.

John writes "Why do we have mission? What is mission all about? Why do you want to go and tell your family, friends, work colleagues and school mates about the Lord Jesus Christ? Why? Mission is about the glory of God going to the ends of the earth. That's the goal of mission and the gospel. It's through the gospel that people come to know God. When they come back into relationship with God, they bring Him the glory He deserves. But if this is going to happen, it's going to require a radical response from God's people. If God's glory is going to go to the ends of the earth, it's going to require a radical response from His people. Is this happening? If not, have we become too comfortable with Jesus?"



John and Rose Evans and their family

Rev Dr Thang Bwee of Myanmar



Rev Dr Thang Bwee

Thank you to those people who prayed for a visa to allow the Rev Dr Thang Bwee of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar, to visit Australia. His application via the Australian Embassy in Yangon was successful. However, the applications of his wife and daughter were denied.

Thang Bwee is now in Australia and will be engaging in a speaking tour in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania.

The Free Reformed Church of Myanmar

For over 8 years we have had a Partner Church relationship with the Free Reformed Church of Myanmar, led by the Rev James Mang Khen Thang. Due to a number of changes that have taken place within that denomination, the Mission Partners' Executive concluded that it would be inappropriate for us to continue the Partnership. We have informed the Rev Thang that our Partnership Agreement will conclude on the 30th June, 2012. Thank you to those members of the Australian church who have supported this ministry over the years especially through disaster relief and student sponsorships. The conclusion of our Partnership Agreement means that we will not be seeking student sponsorships at the Grace Bible Seminary in 2012. Any donations given between now and June 30, 2012 will be passed on to the Free Reformed Church of Myanmar.

This does not affect our Partner Church agreement with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar, led by the Rev Dr Thang Bwee. In 2012 we will still be seeking sponsorships for students at the Reformed Bible Institute and evangelists with the Evangelical Reformed Church.

Martin Eagle

Martin Eagle serves as a Mission Partners' missionary in Myanmar with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar. He has settled in well and loves the people and country. When foreigners visit Myanmar they must stay in tourist accommodation. In the last



Martin Eagle

12 months Martin has been trying to secure permission to live in an apartment that he wants to rent. However, due to bureaucracy it has been difficult to get the necessary permission but now it has come! Martin writes '...I received a phone call. It was Thang Bwee, and the first thing he says to me is, "I have some news. It could be good news or bad news, but I think you'd better decide which it is." I'm not the sort of person to think the worst straight away, so I'm trying to think what might be coming next, whether it be good or bad. So I tell Thang Bwee that I'm ready, either way. He strings me along for another 30 seconds or so, and at one point says, "Maybe I should just wait until I see you", followed

by great laughter. He has a terrific sense of humour and a clever wit, and was having fun with me because he knew what the news was that he was bringing!

Eventually, he said, "Ok, here's what I need to tell you. The local authorities have just said to me that you are now allowed to move into your apartment. You don't need any more paperwork now, they just allow you to go and live there, no problems." Please join with Martin in praising God for this news!

How Proshikkhon has Impacted my Ministry

I am often asked what my greatest challenge was during my time on Proshikkhon in 2009. Proshikkhon served up many challenges: the language; the Islamic culture; being taken out of my comfort zone; but without a doubt the greatest challenge then was understanding what benefit Bible Storytelling and Contextualisation would have for my ministry in Australia. Bible Storytelling made sense in a country like Bangladesh that has a high level of illiteracy. Contextualisation is similarly relevant in a culture where people are converted from varied religious backgrounds. But what use can it be in Australia?

Actually, both have found a place in my ministry here in Tasmania. It is a remarkable thing to know that Christ through His blood has purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God. It is happening in Bangladesh; it is happening in our communities.

Bible Storytelling has enabled me to bring more life to my sermons and Bible studies at a level that reaches people of different ages and backgrounds. It allows less religious jargon and more listener friendly words that convey the same message. This has had benefits not only in preaching, but also youth group devotions and Sunday school lessons, as people see the story.

Contextualisation has proven useful on many occasions, particularly with recent converts who have had no Sunday school upbringing or exposure to Christian Education classes in schools. They bring with them secular views on marriage, gambling, alcohol, and sin amongst many others. Through understanding contextualisation and by working alongside these people I have been able to help them discover for themselves the truth of the Bible.

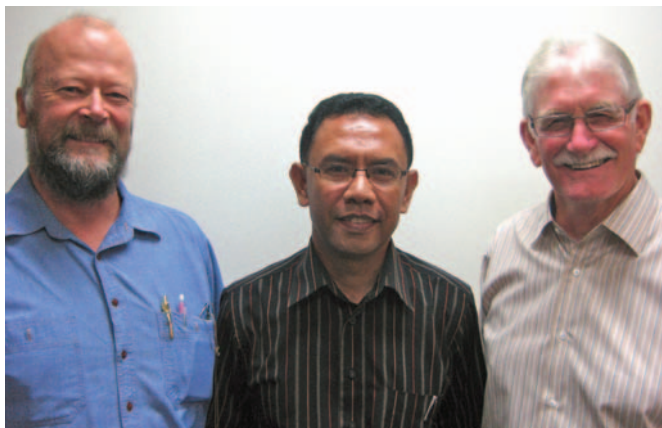
Bible Storytelling and Contextualisation are important tools for sharing the gospel, in working alongside the exposition of the Word. It has empowered my ministry; it has empowered our congregation's ministry and it can empower yours!

Pastor Ian Partridge, Sidmouth, Tasmania

To find out more about the Wycliffe Australia Proshikkhon team in January 2013, email keith_benn@wycliffe.org



Ministry in East Timor: 'We are not alone'



Rev Rob Duncason (Darwin) Daniel Marcal & Robert Benn

The Rev Daniel Marcal, Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Timor was in Australia to meet with Mission Partners. The Rev Robert Benn took the opportunity to interview him about the life of the Church. Please note that 'Timor Leste' is the name used by the people of East Timor to refer to their nation.

Please tell us about the history of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Timor.

Thank you very much for inviting me to Australia. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste has 14 churches and 3 chapels. We have about 3,500 members. We have 9 pastors — 6 full-time and 3 part-time. We also have 6 evangelists. These men work together to develop the work of God in Timor Leste.

What have been the things that have really helped the church to grow?

I want to say "thank you very much" for our brothers and sisters from the Presbyterian Church of Australia for supporting the church so that it can grow up. For example we have received scholarships to support our students in primary and secondary school and university. We thank you for the support for our pastors and the rehabilitation of our church buildings. As you know, most of our church buildings were built in the time when the Indonesians ruled Timor Leste and now are in need of repair. But with your support we have been able to carry out repairs to some of our buildings so that our members can worship there.

We thank you for the musical equipment that you have provided along with the transport and horses. We receive strength through your support in prayers and visiting us. Your visits spur our spirits to develop the work of God in Timor Leste.

Daniel, you've held positions in the church that have been very important in developing the church. You know the difficulties that the church has walked through in recent years and you know that your present church is only 3 years old. What are the challenges that you face in ministry in East Timor?

There are many challenges. We have come out of a church that had many problems. It was very difficult to develop the work of God. For example, it calls itself 'Presbyterian' but is not following the system of Presbyterian government. It was more Episcopal with the Moderator as the big boss. Some of us asked "How can we best serve God?". We decided that we wanted to create a real Presbyterian Church in Timor Leste. But now the challenges have come to us — we have limited pastors and only two missionaries. Many of our members still have old belief systems so that they believe not just the things of God but also traditional things. This makes it hard to grow spiritually.

Another challenge is that we don't have enough money to support our pastors. Following independence, our nation has suffered economically and this has affected our church members so that there is not enough money to support our pastors. We don't have enough money to support our school children. There are many children who want to go to school but their parents don't have enough money. In Timor Leste there is no public transport outside of the city and this makes it very difficult for our pastors when they visit another congregation.

In Dili we have 100 members but we are worshipping under a tarpaulin. This embarrasses some of our members, but praise the Lord that most of our members gather together every Sunday to worship the Lord.

Daniel, when we visit East Timor we see that the joy of the Lord has captured many in the congregations. What are the things that make you rejoice?

We believe that God is always with us - even when things are very difficult for us. We know that we are not alone and have many brothers and sisters outside Timor Leste especially in the Australian Presbyterian Church. This connection is strengthened through the work of Rev Robert Duncanson in Darwin. We value your support in prayer.

Thank you for saying nice things about us! What do you want to say to the Presbyterian Church of Australia?

Please come and help us to continue to develop the work of God in Timor Leste. I always say to our church members and some other friends from outside the work in Timor Leste that this is a project of God so that all of us are owners of the project and that includes the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

We think that to develop the work of God in Timor Leste we will need the help of our friends from Australia and other places. It's not easy to develop but if we stay together and put our ideas together I believe that the Presbyterian Church in Timor Leste will grow each day and many people will come to accept Jesus for salvation.

Daniel we want to tell you as the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Timor Leste, that it is a tremendous privilege for us to be partnering with you and we pray that that partnership will bring great glory to God and see many of your people coming into the Kingdom and serving him as he wants us to serve. God bless you brother.

Thank you very much.



Moderator General Rt Rev David Jones and Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Timor, Rev Daniel Marcal