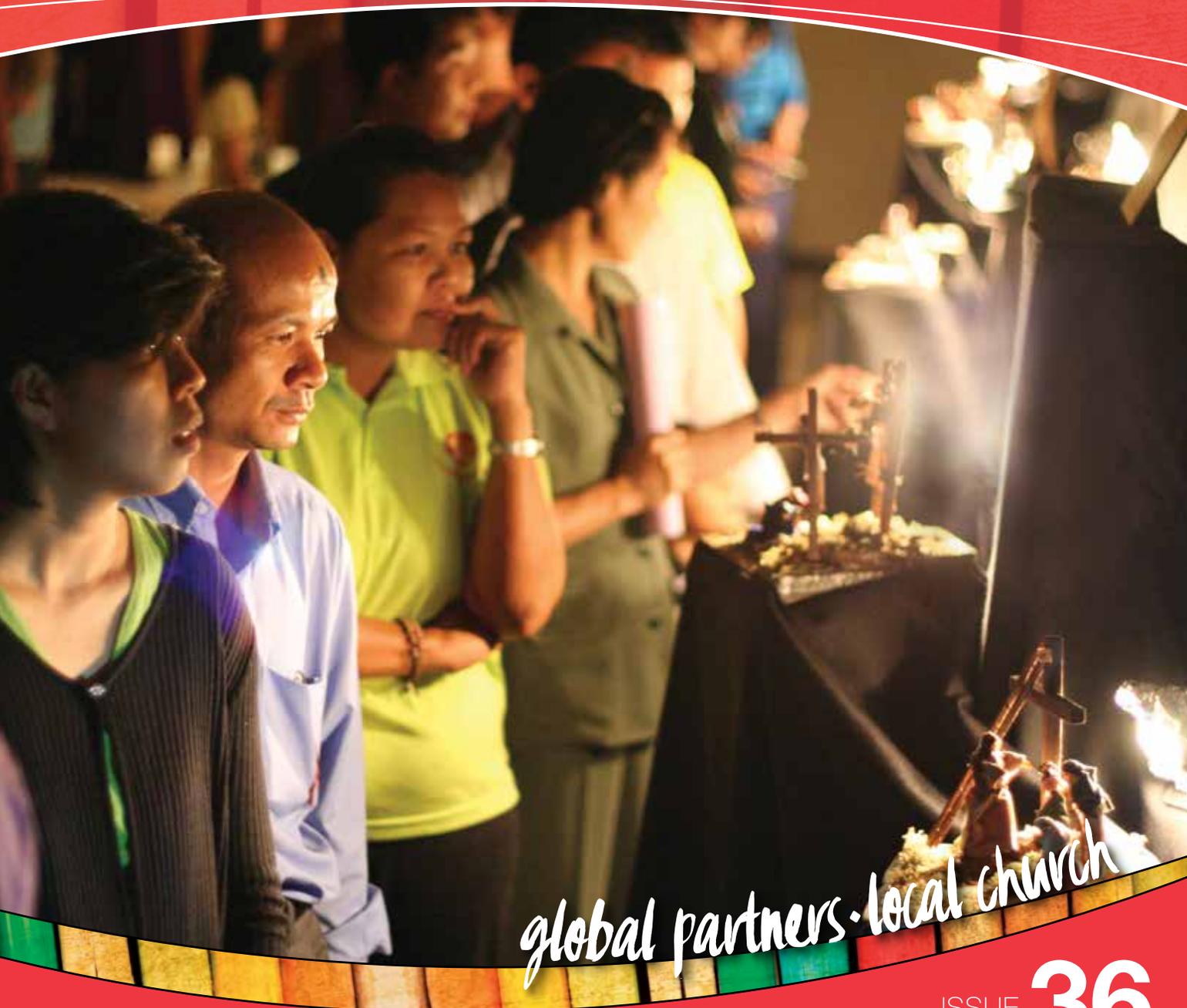




LUTHERAN
CHURCH
OF AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL MISSION

BORDER CROSSINGS



global partners · local church

ISSUE
APRIL 2022

36

>> Through long-established relationships, LCA International Mission seeks to equip, encourage, engage in and support the growth of holistic ministry carried out in relationship with our partners overseas and the individuals, congregations and districts of the Lutheran Church of Australia.



GOD PREPARES HEARTS TO HEAR HIS WORD



Nevin Nitschke

Program Officer
– International Mission
Lutheran Church
of Australia

A constant in church mission and ministry is that God's Spirit is at work in the lives of people – the same people he made and the same people he loves.

The Holy Spirit is always preparing hearts to hear his word and know his love. It might be the heart of a neighbour, a friend, a work colleague or a stranger that God is preparing to know him as Lord and Saviour. It is God's mission, and he invites us, his children, to share in the joy of sharing his love, grace and hope.

Another constant in mission is that it is often in our hurts and difficulties that we find ourselves searching for answers to life. We do not look for a sermon or an example of holy living, but rather someone who is open about their vulnerability and honest about their brokenness. In these moments of authenticity, we can come out from behind our facades to a place where hearing God's love becomes healing for our souls.

In this edition of Border Crossings, we share the story of an Australian school's partnership with a school and a community-based rehabilitation centre in Indonesia. We learn of a doll ministry in Japan that provides an opportunity for God's word to be shared among those who would normally actively avoid any mention of Jesus. Chak Mun from the Lutheran Church in Cambodia explains how God touched his life through a youth program by which he came to know Jesus. Rev Dr Wilfred John Samuel from the Lutheran Study Centre in Sabah, Malaysia, thanks the Lutheran Tract Mission for the opportunity of two arms of the Lutheran family – one in Malaysia and one in Australia – to combine their resources and produce tracts in languages spoken in Malaysia. Finally, Mark and Lorene van Rossen from Wycliffe Bible Translators describe how God used Mark's trials to establish a counselling program that changes the lives of those in the mission fields across Asia and the Pacific.

As these stories show, God delights in using our strengths and the gifts he has given us, but it is also in our weaknesses and frailty that he performs wonders showing his love to us, through us, and to those around us. This is true for both our personal relationships and among our international church partnerships.

So, if you are feeling that God can't use you in your brokenness, remember that it is he who prepares hearts to hear his word. He invites us to trust him and share the amazing unconditional love he shows us, both through our strengths and in our weaknesses.



Boys Brigade fosters a love for Jesus

Kong Chak Mun works for the Lutheran Church in Cambodia (LCC) as an administrator and ministry support person. He was sent by the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) and is financially supported by LCA International Mission.

Chak Mun came to faith through the Boys Brigade youth ministry program. Before that, he practised Taoism. His mum told him he could join the Boy's Brigade and the Lutheran church but, she said, 'just don't get baptised!' However, five years after joining the youth group, Chak Man was baptised – a natural progression as his faith developed. At the Boy's Brigade he found people prepared to walk with, correct and care about him and who took the time to invest in his growth as a person and as a follower of Jesus. Within the group, many young adults talked about their working life and how they actively served God. When Chak Mun's mum was diagnosed with

cancer, members visited his family and, through their support, he came to value his faith community.

Chak Mun prayed that if God extended his mum's life, he would serve him. His mother lived another four years and Chak Mun went to Cambodia for two years as a volunteer, where he helped start the Boy's Brigade with the Methodist church. Three years after moving back to Singapore, Chak Mun returned to Cambodia in 2015 to help the young LCC.

'In Cambodia, many Christians rely on pastors to translate the Bible', he says. 'They don't read the Bible. Many leaders resist simplified translations of the Bible as they feel the words are not worthy of the King and are too simplified.' However, Chak Mun prefers The Message translation. He says it builds on the concept of a relationship with God, which is very important to him.

His passion for the Boy's Brigade has continued and, even while serving in his current role, he continues with the youth program as one of five adult leaders.

Because of his experience with the Boy's Brigade, he has a focus on mentoring young people and walking beside them. He feels that, although every person has different hurts and challenges, each of God's children need words of encouragement, forgiveness and grace.

Chak Mun has learnt that international partner churches are a blessing to LCC. And he reflects on the importance of partners giving time and space to new churches to develop practices that reflect their culture and offer a safe place for people to grow in their faith.

Even if Chak Mun doesn't see all the fruits of what God has been doing through him in Cambodia, he trusts that God has used him for the extension of his kingdom.

How are we joining with God as he transforms people through the gospel?

LCA International Mission supports the salary of Kong Chak Mun as he serves the Lutheran Church in Cambodia.

How can you support this work?

If you would like to financially support Kong Chak Mun, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.



Cross-cultural exchange BRINGS GREAT BLESSINGS

With the support of LCA International Mission and the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia (KN-LWF), Immanuel Lutheran College (ILC) from Buderim in Queensland developed a partnership with HKBP SMP and SMA Secondary Schools (junior and senior high schools) in Parapat North Sumatra in 2017. We also connected with a disability service, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), in the neighbouring province of Raya.

From the outset, it was clear that these communities were challenged by their context and financial capacity. Our partnership has centred on cultural exchange and promoting an understanding of diversity and mutual respect.

We have visited the school and CBR, as well as bringing teachers from Parapat and volunteers from CBR to Immanuel. Staff and students have engaged meaningfully in the 'why' of the relationships and jointly determined how Immanuel's support can be targeted in Sumatra.

Immanuel has worked closely with leaders and church officials in Indonesia to ensure that finances and resources complement what is happening on the ground. Ridwin Purba from KN-LWF has provided wonderful support in facilitating visits and communication with Parapat and CBR. His passion for developing and deepening relationships between Australian schools and Indonesian communities has been an amazing blessing.

One of the most pleasing outcomes from these relationships has been to witness the growth and engagement of our students and staff. In the spirit of service-learning, it is the ongoing 'learning' that occurs pre- and post-trip, and the influence that these experiences have on the culture within the Immanuel community.

In recent years COVID-19 has made maintaining these partnerships more complex, exacerbated by the vagaries of the relationship between the local church congregation and school. We have focused on supporting the school

through targeted financial assistance, resource provision, improving access to technology and developing governance capacity. Unfortunately, the pandemic has resulted in some families withdrawing children from the school and consequently, the junior secondary school has closed. The school now only offers years 10 to 12 but we are committed to the relationship and continue to liaise with school leaders and local officials to find ways to continue the partnership.

These relationships have been a blessing to all involved. In particular, there has been a tangible change in ILC staff and students' understanding of the global community. We are prayerfully hopeful that the Indonesian school can turn around the enrolment decline and that CBR will continue to thrive. We thank God and pray that all partnerships between our schools and overseas communities will continue to be richly blessed.

– Colin Minke

How are we joining with God partnering in the gospel?

LCA International Mission works in partnership with Lutheran Education Australia and our overseas partner churches to provide opportunities for Lutheran schools, teachers and students from Australia to develop long-term, sustainable relationships and transformative service partnerships, which are mutually beneficial to the Australian school and the school of the overseas Lutheran church.

How can you partner?

If your school would like to know more about how to connect to the mission of God through an LCA International Mission partnership, please contact us.





EVEN DOLLS CAN TELL OF THE LOVE OF GOD

by Rev Naoki Sugioka

When I was a missionary in Thailand, a Finnish missionary, Dr Lilja Kinnunen-Riipinen, taught drama at the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education in Bangkok. Every Lent, she directed a passion play – a drama of Jesus' trial, suffering, and crucifixion performed by students and church members.

One year, she had to cancel the play and was looking for a replacement event. By coincidence, I showed her a Japanese Christian newspaper that contained photos of scenes from Bible stories that my wife, Hiroko Sugioka, had made using dolls. Hiroko is an artist who made 'Bible dolls' to illustrate children's Bible stories in that newspaper.

That year, Dr Lilja produced the passion play using Hiroko's storytelling dolls in a dimly lit classroom. She displayed dolls at each station – scenes from the Last Supper through to the crucifixion of Christ. Only a few people could enter that small theatre at a time, so each could meditate on the passion of Christ. The dolls directly spoke to people's hearts. After seeing the play, some people tearfully said, 'Now I understand more the meaning of the death of Christ'.

Hiroko then started the Bible Doll Ministry, making dolls to convey the 'Stations of the Cross', the Christmas story and women in the Bible. She travelled to countries with her

'actors' in one suitcase, opening the Bible doll theatres in churches, day nurseries, community halls, youth camps, women's conferences, international events and even in disaster refuge centres.

Once in Tokyo, a church held a Bible doll exhibition for seven days during Christmas. More than 1,000 people visited that exhibition – many more than the usual 100 we expect for a church event. Some people started going to Sunday services from those audiences, with some later being baptised.

After more than 15 years, this ministry is still developing. Hiroko says, 'This is not me who produces this ministry, but our Lord. If the Lord didn't send us to Thailand, I couldn't meet Dr Lilja, and if I didn't know her, my dolls were never brought to life'.

Overseas mission is not a one-way ministry. It bears various kinds of unexpected fruits, and they will certainly return to your home country. We may apply these words of Jesus to our mission too: 'Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you' (Luke 6:38).

You can enjoy more photos on the 'Bibledoll ministry' Facebook page.

Rev Naoki Sugioka serves in Japan's Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church

PROCLAIMING
THE
• GOSPEL •

How are we supporting our partners as they proclaim the gospel?

LCA International Mission partners with the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan as part of our involvement with the Mekong Mission Forum and partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.

How can you support the proclamation of the gospel?

If you would like to donate to the Bible Doll Ministry in Japan, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

STORIES OF MISSION

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

AROUND THE GLOBE

Support for mission field challenges

How can you support this work?

If you would like to support The Red Sea Counselling and Member Care Centre Limited, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

by Mark and Lorene van Rossen

Arriving in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with her husband and four children was all Sarah* hoped it would be. Within days, they were studying with other new arrivals in an orientation course and learning the local language and culture.

Soon after, they were taken to the 'village living' component of their orientation training – four weeks living with the people as locals do and speaking the language. The children thrived and after four weeks, they returned to the main base to take up their assignments.

But within a short amount of time, Sarah felt increasingly unable to cope with daily life. Missionary life is really hard. Leaving all to follow Jesus has a cost. Sarah felt she needed help, but many of her support networks – friends, family, church and familiar routines – were all left behind in her home country.

She began to lean on others in the community. People rallied behind her and her family, to support and encourage them, but Sarah continued to spiral into depression. Although basic medical help was available, and despite amazing people in the community stepping in to help, Sarah reached the point at which even this was no longer enough. Almost six months after arriving she, accompanied by her husband and children, was medically evacuated back to her home country to receive specialist help.

Without the proper supports, some missionaries are leaving the mission field to receive professional help, and many are not coming back. Outreach ministries stop, Bible translation

projects grind to a halt, pilot and administration staff seemingly depart overnight. Those left behind to carry on the work all take a step back, a step closer to burnout and overload themselves. Something needs to change.

So, in 2020, we and Dr Roger van der Veen began working through consultancy scenarios and meeting with multiple mission agencies, after which we decided to set up a specialist counselling centre for missionaries – past, present and future.

The Red Sea Counselling and Member Care Centre Limited is now registered and has approved charity status. The next phase of establishing this centre is to find a facility to operate from in Cairns, Queensland, to serve missionaries throughout the Pacific region. But to make this happen, funds are needed.

The need is estimated to be around \$200,000 for the first 12 to 18 months, after which time, we plan to be completely self-sustaining. This service will be for all missionaries and Christian cross-culture workers in the Asia-Pacific region, regardless of denomination or agency.

Would you consider partnering with us to equip missionaries with the tools they need to live resilient lives? Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. For more information, please contact us at mark_vanrossen@wycliffe.org.au or phone 0437 429 451.

Mark and Lorene van Rossen are from Wycliffe Bible Translators.

**This story is used with permission, but names have been changed.*

TRAINING
IN THE

• GOSPEL •

SHARING ENCOURAGEMENT IN ANY LANGUAGE

by Rev Dr Wilfred John Samuel

Martin Luther understood the power and impact of the written word – ‘If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write’, he wrote.

His writing changed the world, from his 95 Theses to translations of Scripture and publications of his sermons, devotions and theological considerations. Luther was dedicated to providing access to the gospel for all people, not just the privileged and educated of the day. Lutherans around the world value the written word as a means of providing access to the gospel for people in their own languages.

With this in mind, two arms of the Lutheran family – one in Malaysia and one in Australia – have combined their resources to produce tracts in languages spoken in Malaysia.

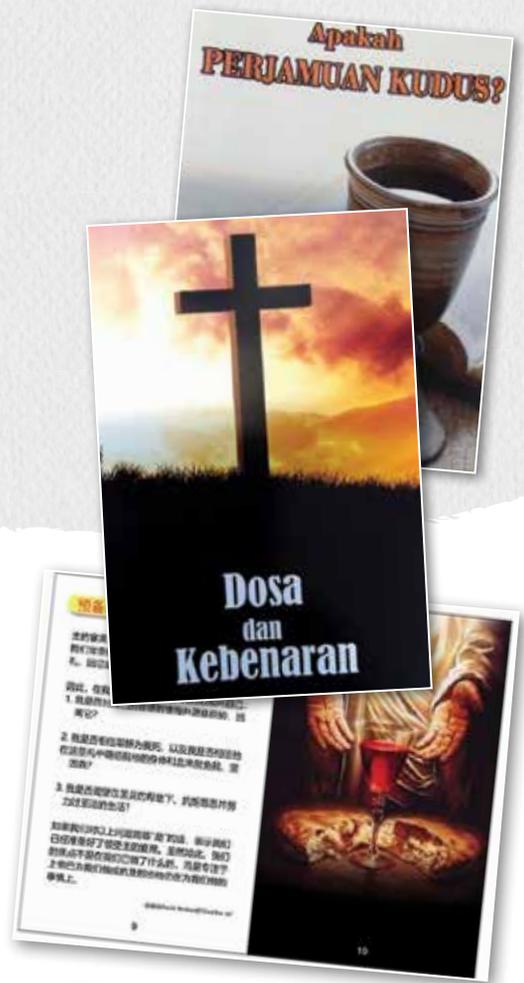
The Lutheran Study Centre (LSC) in Sabah was established for the benefit of local and regional Lutheran churches in Malaysia. Its purpose is to help these churches embrace Lutheran confessional identity, as they proclaim the gospel to the people of Malaysia. The LSC publication ministry invests time and resources in promoting the publication and translation of tracts and other reading material suitable for Lutheran lay members and clergy. This ministry plays a crucial role by making resource materials available for members to read, understand and appreciate our Lutheran heritage and confessional stand.

The LLL's Lutheran Tract Mission (LTM) outreach ministry in Australia produces tracts, which are short written messages of hope and encouragement, in the service of bringing messages of God's saving grace to all people. Tract Development Officer Anne Hansen knows God's word is not limited to English translations, but that it needs to be provided in all languages so that everyone can read of God's saving grace in their own language. ‘Just like at Pentecost when the disciples spoke in the languages of all the people, so we also have the mission ahead of us to proclaim God's love to all nations’, she says. ‘Other countries are better at it than Australia, but we can always improve with God's help.’

In 2016, LTM made several tracts available to LSC for translation. The then director of LSC, Dr Eric Trozzo, was encouraged by LCA NZ emeritus pastor Dr Vic Pfitzner to translate LTM tracts to add to LSC resources. Translations were made into local languages and dialects, including Tamil, Mandarin and Malay.

I would like to thank the Lutheran Church of Australia and LTM for making available tracts and other resource material to LSC. This joint effort will support our objective to enhance Lutheran confessional identity.

Rev Dr Wilfred John Samuel is Director of the Lutheran Study Centre Malaysia



How are we training in the gospel?

LCA International Mission supports the Lutheran Study Centre in Sabah as it serves the Lutheran churches in Southeast Asia by training pastors, lay members and other non-program students for service in the churches and broader society.

How can you support this training in the gospel?

If you would like to support the Lutheran Study Centre to translate and print tracts to make available for their students, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.





I'M JOINING IN GOD'S MISSION BY *praying for*

- Hiroko Sugioka, in her creation of scenes from the Bible using dolls to minister in churches, day nurseries, community halls, youth camps, women's conferences, international events and disaster refuge centres
- Kong Chak Mun, as he serves the Lutheran Church in Cambodia through his support of administration, that the Holy Spirit will provide him with words that communicate effectively among the Cambodian community

Prayer is so important because many of our partner churches are working in new territory for the kingdom of God and spiritual attack is their everyday reality.

- Lutheran Tract Mission staff as they provide short written messages of hope and encouragement in the service of bringing messages of God's saving grace to all people
- The Red Sea Counselling and Member Care Centre, which seeks to support Christian cross-cultural workers past and present through the provision of counselling services and member care disciplines and training so that missionaries can effectively fulfil their calling and carry out their ministries

- Partnerships between Indonesian and Australian schools, that they will provide valuable learning experiences and growth in faith for the students and staff of these schools

To download monthly prayer points, go to www.lca.org.au/international-mission/join-gods-mission/pray/

They can also be accessed via the LCA International Mission eNews – to sign up, go to www.lca.org.au/enews

'Lord, renew your church, begin with me!'



I'M JOINING IN GOD'S MISSION BY *volunteering*

You can experience firsthand how God's love is coming to life through the word-and-action gospel work of our partner churches.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND – CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH TEACHER

Many of the LCA International Mission partner churches would like native English speakers to share their faith and develop friendships with their members while encouraging them in English conversation. There are in-country and online opportunities available.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND – STAMPS RECEIVER

Volunteer stamps receivers are needed to collect, clean, sort and send out bundles of used stamps to be sold for the Stamps for Mission program. Receivers are also advocates for the program in the community where they live.

What to do next ... If you would like to know more about volunteering in mission overseas, go to www.lca.org.au/international-mission or contact Nevin Nitschke at nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au or lcaim@lca.org.au or phone **08 8267 7300**.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND – CONGREGATION REP

Being a volunteer congregational representative for LCA International Mission in your home congregation involves encouraging others in mission by sharing resources and promoting LCA International Mission opportunities.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND – VIDEO EDITOR

LCA International Mission uses video to promote God's mission among our partner churches and is seeking volunteers to edit these for use at synods, Lutheran women's conventions and speaking engagements in churches and schools.



I'M JOINING IN GOD'S MISSION BY *giving to...*

We take great care of your financial gifts. You can be confident they will assist our partner Lutheran churches to bring the good news of Jesus to their communities.

... LCA International Mission's work with our partner churches

(Please indicate the ministries and programs you would like to support and write the amount of your gift/s in the spaces provided.)

- The Bible Doll Ministry supported by Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church, **Japan** \$ _____
- Kong Chak Mun, Administrator and Ministry Support Person, **Cambodia** \$ _____
- Translation and printing of tracts for the Lutheran Study Centre, **Malaysia** \$ _____
- The Red Sea** Counselling and Member Care Centre \$ _____
- I would like to leave a bequest for LCA International Mission in my will (please send me information)

Please send this completed form to LCA International Mission 197 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA 5006

- Please send me a receipt

You can support one or more of the above mission projects in any of the following ways:

- online at www.lca.org.au/international-mission/act-now/donate/ (credit card)
- OR fill out the form below (credit card or cheque)
- OR Electronic Funds Transfer; please contact LCA International Mission on **08 8267 7300** for more details

Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____ (cheques payable to LCA International Mission)

Please debit my Visa MasterCard

Card no

Expiry / CCV

Amount \$ _____

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Email _____