



LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
OF AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL MISSION

# BORDER CROSSINGS



*global partners · local church*

ISSUE  
APRIL 2024

41



>> 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.



### Erin Kerber

Program Officer, with responsibility for the Volunteer, School Service-learning and Congregation Partnership Programs

## HOW GOD BLESSES US – AND COUNTLESS OTHERS – THROUGH YOU

As I farewelled a young American family transiting in Adelaide on their way to begin serving in Papua New Guinea, as I spoke with a young Australian woman about to fly out to volunteer in Indonesia teaching English, and as I prepared this edition of *Border Crossings*, I reflected on how the Holy Spirit is present to Pastor Matt Anker and me, along with our overseas partners, through each of you who volunteer for LCA International Mission.

I pondered how we are the recipients of God's faithfulness and provision, as each of you live your calling as disciples of Jesus. How you remind us of God's promises and his assurance to never leave or forsake us.

I thought, too, of the ways you express hearts of overflowing love for God's global mission and are unrelenting in your expressions of care and concern and words of encouragement. You fill our lives with joy as we witness you using your gifts for the benefit of others.

I remembered how you share the ways your faith communities can join us in God's global mission. How you give of your time to prepare and package birthing kits. How you equip and resource your churches and schools to connect with your overseas partners. How you ensure that we continue to share the stories of those who have encountered our almighty God in a real and personal way through Australian and New Zealander Lutherans who have served overseas. How you offer generous hospitality to our overseas guests and show a genuine interest in them and their ministries and how you spend countless hours collecting and sorting stamps to raise vital funds for our overseas partner's programs.

I thank God when you join him in his mission to make disciples of all nations. I thank God for your fervent prayer and unrelenting support. I thank God for the ways you have enabled LCA International Mission to create spaces where those who don't yet have a relationship with Jesus are reminded of their worth. I thank God every time you give us a glimpse of his kingdom which is to come.



# TWO DECADES OF SUPPORTING MUMS AND BABIES

Twenty years after Margaret Voigt presented the idea to the Lutheran Women of Australia's (LWA) convention to supply birthing kits to Papua New Guinea (PNG), the 2023 birthing kits shipment arrived in Lae in mid-November.

The 750 birthing kits will be distributed to various health facilities which are supported by Lutheran Health Services, the health ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELC-PNG).

The birthing kits provide for clean and safe deliveries, reducing the chance of infant death or babies developing infection after delivery. This is why the kits are so important and helpful for mothers, particularly those living in the most remote areas.

Many mothers have no choice but to give birth at home in their village, with the assistance of untrained relatives or trained village birth attendants. No health workers are available to give professional medical assistance to a woman when something goes wrong in a village house birth, and it is also very difficult to transfer her to hospital. Because of this limited accessibility to birthing services, PNG has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

Although most of the birthing kits are generously supplied by LWA members, some of the 2023 shipment came from St Martins Lutheran College in Mount Gambier, South Australia. Having learnt about the differences in resources for mothers and babies in PNG compared with most of Australia, Year 9 girls decided to contribute to the gifts provided for PNG women. They bought supplies for, collated and assembled the birthing kits. Some of the girls also embroidered small features on the baby singlets and created cards to give to the mother and new baby.

The students said: 'We valued undertaking this project so that we could support families who face a potentially stressful birthing process. It was very rewarding knowing that we were doing something to help someone else, even someone we would never meet. We hope that these kits provide help and comfort to the new mothers in PNG and we hope to continue supporting this project into the future.'



Once the kits were ready to be shipped, LCA International Mission volunteers Joan and Kevin Koster and students from Endeavour College in Mawson Lakes, South Australia assisted with finalising the packaging, weighing and measuring each box.

LCA International Mission acknowledges and thanks everyone who has contributed towards providing these birthing kits – a life-giving gift of blessings, support, encouragement and hope for the medical staff, communities, women and babies in PNG.

How are we joining with God partnering in the gospel?

**Completed birthing kits are stored at the LCA NZ Churchwide Office in Adelaide and shipped annually to PNG through the ELC-PNG Project Office.**

How can you partner?

**If you would like to consider the opportunity to join God's mission through assembling and donating birthing kits, please contact Erin on +61 8 8267 7317 or email [erin.kerber@lca.org.au](mailto:erin.kerber@lca.org.au)**

**To donate to the shipping costs of the kits, please refer to the back of this edition.**





# HARNESSING THE POWER

## *and promises of prayer*

Prayer is simply, by faith, the articulation of our heart's response to that which begins in the heart of God.

The Trinity are so intimately connected that their thoughts form the continual communion and community that is prayer. Their first recorded internal conversation and prayer (let there be light, let there be life) begins the same way all prayers do - with the sincere desire of God to love.

And it continues with the unrelenting grace of the Lord to save. And finds its loudest voice in the sacrificial act of Christ who saved us by his death and resurrection. And whispers through the Holy Spirit each day, even when we stop listening.

And, as we enter into the Trinity's conversation of love, we acknowledge that God is holy; beg God to make our world a little more heaven-like; ask that everyone has enough to eat; practise what it means to forgive and accept forgiveness; plead that we not be distracted by ungodly things and express our desire not to suffer injustice or pain.

We know the importance of prayer. And yet when we pray aloud in front of others, we often can't think of what we want to say. And when we're on our own, we are often inattentive to the moments we could use for prayer.

In Romans 8:26,27 St Paul writes: 'the Spirit helps us in our weakness.'

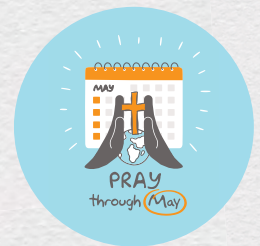
We don't know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people.'

And in verse 34 we read, 'Christ Jesus ... is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us'.

Even when we can't find the words to pray, we are reassured that our desires and needs are being heard as the Spirit interprets our heart, and as the Son intercedes for us, and as the Father hears with love. Prayer is enjoying the care of a powerful Father.

Rationally speaking, prayer makes no sense. And yet our LCA International Mission partners continually remind us of its importance. And that's why we invite you to pray with us by using our monthly prayer calendar, by joining us for our monthly online prayer gathering and by praying while meditating on devotions written for the 40 days of Lent. And that is why we have decided to launch a month-long invitation for LCA members to cultivate communities of prayer through May.

Please join us in prayer, for in doing so you participate with joy by grace in who God is and with his mission in Australia, New Zealand and abroad.



**To join us for our Online Monthly Prayer Gathering on the last Tuesday of every month at noon (ACST), register at [lcaim@lca.org.au](mailto:lcaim@lca.org.au)**

**Download and print or read our monthly Prayer Calendar online via our website.**

**Register and find out more about Pray through May by contacting LCA International Mission on +61 8 8267 7317 or [lcaim@lca.org.au](mailto:lcaim@lca.org.au)**





PROCLAIMING  
THE  
GOSPEL

# SHARING FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Steam rises from slowly roasted peanuts and bodies are cooled from stifling heat with fresh-pressed sugarcane juice and coconut ice cream sundaes. Men and women use the tiers of the *chan srak* food containers to transport rice, a few dishes and a dessert as an offering to monks on behalf of deceased relatives, under the gaze of the Buddha statue. Outside the pagoda, hands and baskets are outstretched for alms and tinny loudspeakers announce donations from each family.

Although the food offerings are lavish, they do not represent the livelihoods of the 300 families of Teuk Chenh village in Cambodia. The village is surrounded by rice paddies and full of rice farmers, but years of poor rainfall have limited them to one crop a year. Out of necessity, men have had to seek extra income working on city construction sites, leaving their wives and children home to grow and harvest rice. Struggling families often take out high-interest loans and end up heavily in debt.

Teuk Chenh also has a strong folk religion, with villagers mixing traditional animist and Buddhist beliefs. Christians are met with suspicion. And yet it is here that the Holy Spirit led the Lutheran Church in Cambodia (LCC) to begin sharing about Jesus' saving love.

Knowing they would not be welcome to evangelise in homes, LCC built a place to teach English classes. At first, children would not attend out of fear of the spirit that had inhabited the tree growing in front of the building, so LCC removed the tree. Then parents began to fear the conversion of their children from the Christian English classes they were receiving and so forbade them to attend.

Searching for other ways to connect with locals, LCC tried a program used in other villages. While the people of Teuk Chenh were giving a significant contribution from their meagre earnings to the monks and pagoda, LCC began to prepare enough food to offer 50 children a nutritious meal once per week.

Now, as the motorbike drives into the village, children are drawn out by aromas coming from a large pot on the trailer behind it. Just as Jesus used food to share poignant teachings, including at the Last Supper, LCC allows the Holy Spirit to reveal the generosity of our loving Heavenly Father through this program. As the children return home with their *chan srak* full of nourishment, they and their parents are beginning to wonder about this servant God, who doesn't ask for offerings from people with so little, but instead gives in abundance.



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

All proceeds from LCA International Mission's *Soul Food* recipe book will be contributed to LCC's feeding program. To purchase a copy of *Soul Food* for a donation of \$20, please contact Erin at [erin.kerber@lca.org.au](mailto:erin.kerber@lca.org.au) or phone +61 8 8267 7317.

How can you support the proclamation of the gospel?

If you would like to financially support the feeding program, please refer to the back of this edition.

# Life in the freedom of Christ



Ankarat was born into a Buddhist family and, although his mother and siblings became followers of Jesus when he was young, he was not convinced to join them.

As a Buddhist, Ankarat worked diligently, ardently, intelligently, patiently and persistently. He believed his self-sacrificial living would have lasting consequences, although he remained curious about the Christian God.

He noticed that those who were reaping the greatest harvests and were not impacted by the seasonal landslides in his home village of Ban Huai Mi were Christians who had a cross positioned in their field. He was certain it was the cross that protected the people and their possessions.

An evangelist and a pastor came to Ban Huai Mi to share the love of Jesus – Lun Minh from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) and Harison Ratovohery from the Malagasy Lutheran Church.

When Ankarat's corn field had been planted and his pond filled with fish, he asked Lun Minh and Ratovohery to mark the area with a cross. He asked for the cross to be particularly heavy so that he would struggle and sweat as he heaved it into place. Just as Buddha accepted his heavy sacrifices, he was certain the Christian God would help him with his crops and fish if he struggled to place the cross in his field. To ensure his crops were fruitful and fish plentiful, he decided to visit the doctor spirit as well. If there were many spirits protecting his property, he was sure to reap the rewards.

As the cross stood erect, the Spirit of love and freedom, conviction and power dwelt in Ankarat's heart, and he began to change his mind about God and himself. By the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Ankarat stopped resisting God and undermining his own existence.

He began to believe that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was stronger than the doctor spirit and his own ability to work hard. Ankarat began to trust, acknowledge and say 'amen' to the God who loves and has given himself for Ankarat.

Ankarat noticed the way Lun Minh and his Christian neighbours experienced the freedom that has been granted to us by Jesus Christ. He responded to God's invitation to live in that same freedom and, at the age of 46, was baptised.

Now Ankarat serves the church faithfully. He rests in the peace he has been given. Each day he says 'no' to being an enemy of God by being hostile in mind and deed, and instead says 'yes' to a life of friendship with God.



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

*LCA International Mission partners with the ELCT to support the evangelists who are loving the Lua people with the love of Christ.*

How can you support this work?

*If you would like to support the Lua evangelists as they provide opportunities for those in their community to meet Jesus, please refer to the back of this edition.*





# 'GOD USES ME FOR HIS KINGDOM — EVEN FROM AFAR'

Four years ago, I moved to Asia, started language learning and set up my life there, full of anticipation. But just two months later I was on a plane back to Australia far from my fellow team members, unable to continue language learning and with not much to do.

After months turned into years of being stuck in Australia, I wondered if I would be able to visit Asia again and what God was doing – how could he use me from afar?

Despite the deep disappointment and frustration, God has been faithful, and I now have too much work! I helped update our team's security policy and procedure, especially for digital security. It's not something I have much training in, but I became a translator for our IT experts, breaking down their advice into steps our team members could understand and implement. It was mostly a thankless task but necessary.

After about 18 months, I got the opportunity to work with Samira\* online – a mother-tongue translator for the K language. She was young and enthusiastic but needed training and mentoring to do good-quality translation. At first, she was very shy and didn't have much confidence to speak English, even though she knew it.

However, when my colleagues visited last year, they shared how confident she had become – serving them tea and talking in English. They said this change had come about since I worked with her – which was so encouraging to hear.

I have been able to visit her three times and have cherished our time together. The book of Jonah is about to be published and we are now working on reviewing the draft of Luke. Slowly God's word is going out among the K people for the first time.

I've also been helping to train other mother-tongue translation teams online, particularly in how to better use translation software. Translation consultants check translated books of the Bible to ensure they are clear, accurate and natural before they are printed and used in language communities. We have a number of these consultants on our team and receive many requests from partner organisations for their help.

Last year I began a new role as Translation Consultant Coordinator. This involves coordinating our consultants to meet these requests. I'm trying to develop better systems to manage them.

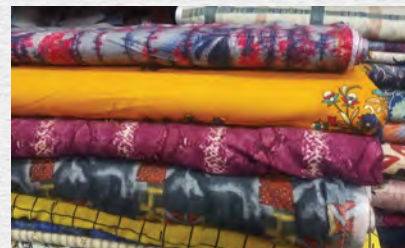
Recently I was asked to join our leadership team which came as a surprise, but it does make sense given my security and coordination roles.

So, although it's not how I thought I would be serving, I can see that God is using the gifts he's given me to further the work of his kingdom in Asia through Bible translation.

## **Audrey\***

\*Not their real names

*Audrey is serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators, which has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lutheran Church of Australia.*







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

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.

- Audrey, as she juggles her different roles (security, training and coordination) while helping bring God's word to the K people in Asia as a translation advisor
- medical staff, communities and mothers who use birthing kits to ensure the safe delivery of their children
- those who have experienced the freedom that has been granted to us in Jesus Christ through the witness of the Lua evangelists in Thailand
- hearts to be open among the people living in Teuk Chenh, Cambodia

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

### CAMBODIA – ONLINE ENGLISH TEACHING MENTOR

Support and mentor the Lutheran Church in Cambodia's English teachers as they use conversational English teaching to build deeper relationships with the church and non-believers.

### INDONESIA – OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Work with children who experience disability to achieve and maintain optimal functioning in interaction with their environments. Occupational therapist qualifications are required.

### THAILAND – CHILD DAYCARE TEACHER

Spend time with children who attend the Home of Praise day care centre and live in the nearby slum. Teach the children action songs, read them books and help with meal and sleep times.

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA – LIBRARY SUPPORT

Support the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea seminary libraries by accompanying a former librarian who is currently living in Melbourne as she develops consistency among the libraries and sets up an online cataloguing system in each of the seminaries.

### AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND - RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

LCA International Mission wants to put together resources for volunteers to use when they are teaching English overseas. This is ideal for people who have some experience with teaching English as a second language.

### WHAT TO DO NEXT ...

If you would like to know more about volunteering in mission overseas, go to [www.lca.org.au/international-mission](http://www.lca.org.au/international-mission), email [lcaim@lca.org.au](mailto:lcaim@lca.org.au) or phone **08 8267 7317**.



## 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.)

- Audrey's work with Bible translation in **Asia** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Shipping costs to send completed birthing kits to **Papua New Guinea** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Feeding program coordinated by the Lutheran Church in **Cambodia** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Evangelists serving among the Lua people in **Thailand** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to leave a bequest for LCA International Mission in my will (please send me information).

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/](http://www.lca.org.au/international-mission/act-now/donate/) (credit card)
- OR Electronic Funds Transfer; please contact LCA International Mission on **08 8267 7300** for more details
- OR fill in your details here (credit card or cheque)

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me a receipt

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