

## A NEW ERA

Exciting projects taking place in Indonesia

## UNKNOWN TERRITORY

Crossing borders of more than just the physical kind

## AYAM BUMBU RUJAK

A recipe for mixed spicy chicken!



# BORDER

# CROSSINGS

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STORIES FROM THE BOARD FOR MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Cover photo: children who were present at the laying of the foundation stone at Pematang Raya

## Border Crossings

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# WHY?



"Why do you waste all that money going overseas to build houses? It seems like such a waste of money. It would be better to send money overseas and let them build their own houses."

This sharp comment about my volunteering visits overseas to build houses for people living poverty surprised me – especially coming from a follower of Jesus. However the way that you or I find answers to this question cum statement has implications for the Lutheran Church of Australia and for our mission here and overseas.

Let me share with you some of the jottings from my journal as I have reflected on scripture to find answers this question...

*We worship God when we serve the poor and needy.*

"I'll tell you what it really means to worship the LORD. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives." (Isaiah 58:6,7 CEV)

*We are actually serving Jesus when we serve others.*

"I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me... whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked and ignored, that was me – you did it to me." (Matt 25: 35-36,40 MSG)

*These things can not be done from a distance or with just money.*

Jesus knelt down and touched the leper (Matthew 8:1-4); He put spit in the eyes of the blind man (Mark 8:22-26); had a meal at the home of Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10); was touch by the unclean woman (Matthew 9:16-22); went to the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:1-37)... washed the feet of his disciples and said "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done." (John 13: 15 NIV)

In this edition of Border Crossings you can read the exciting stories of a church in mission – our partner church the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia. Over recent years our support for the BCCM has mostly been in the form of funds to pay for lecturers at the Seminary Theologica Sabah (STS), lecturers from Australia teaching at STS, books for the STS library, support for the youth ministry program, and funds to support the BCCM's mission into China. I'm excited to say that this year we will have the first team of young people from Melbourne Lutheran Students Fellowship (LSF) traveling to Sabah in June and July to share personally in youth and mission work in the interior of Sabah.

**Glenice Hartwich**  
**Project Officer**  
**Board for Mission**  
**Lutheran Church of Australia**



# EXPRESSIONS OF MISSION



Two brief visits to our LCA partner church, the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) in Sabah on the island of Borneo, can hardly qualify me to write with any authority on the BCCM. However, the church – the people of God – active and passionate about the mission of God is what I treasure most about this dynamic and diverse gathering of people. Two distinct language groups, the Hakka-speaking Chinese and the indigenous Bahasa Malay-speaking members of the BCCM, live and breathe the mission of God in all they do. Mission is not an added extra in the life of the churches, bishops, pastors and people there: mission is all of life for them.

Let me share with you a few snapshots of the varied expressions of mission in the people who are part of the BCCM...



## Congregations planting new congregations

One Sunday morning in August 2007 a line consisting of pastors, church members and the former bishop of the BCCM simultaneously cut a red ribbon at a special celebratory worship service to mark the recognition of the Kingfisher congregation as the newest church in the BCCM (more have followed since that day). Several rooms on two levels of a shopping complex in the suburb of Kingfisher on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu (capital of Sabah) are now home to the Kingfisher congregation.

The congregation had its genesis five years earlier when ten members of the Menggatal congregation were sent out to begin a ministry to the children in the new housing area.

From those early days the congregation has grown to over 70 regular worshippers and the members purchased, re-designed and renovated the rooms in the shopping complex to provide a worship area, Sunday school rooms and offices.

This infant church is already taking on the role of planting new faith communities: Kingfisher has already started a student fellowship with students from the nearby university. Forty-eight students are involved in the ministry, many of them being new converts to faith in Jesus Christ.

As well, this community of believers is paying the salary of their pastor, giving 10% of its offerings to mission in the BCCM, 5% to support theological training, 5% to support financially weak congregations and 50% to pay for their local needs.

When I asked the chairman of the Chinese Council how often these celebrations happen in the Chinese church of the BCCM, he replied, "Well, this year we have not had that many; we have only had three this year." The day concluded with a fundraising dinner for the congregation, with 1000 guests in attendance. It was an inspiring day, to say the least.



## Leaders in mission beyond borders

Looking beyond the borders of their island, the leaders of the BCCM have begun a mission to the Chinese-speaking people living and working in Madagascar. They responded to a call four years ago to come over and help the Chinese Christians, who were struggling to witness to the growing number of Chinese workers moving into the area. (The factories in Madagascar employ many Chinese workers as cheap labour.) This mission began as a Bible study with workers in a garment factory.

The church community is growing and there are now over 60 Chinese people worshipping. Plans are now under way to construct a church building on land they have already purchased.

The Madagascar mission is a key focus for overseas mission for the BCCM, together with their mission to China (see the story shared by Dr Pang Ken Phin in this edition of *Border Crossings*).



## Youth ministry

One of the key areas of the ministry and mission program of the Bahasa Malay people in the BCCM is their program of youth ministry, with a key focus on the National Youth Camp.

In 2007 over 500 young people (including 60 young people from Indonesia) attended the camp held at the foot of Mount Kota Kinabalu. This camp provides a unique opportunity to encourage young people to consider full-time ministry.

The LCA has been privileged to share in this ministry by providing funds for the program each year. New initiatives in leadership training for young people focus on: the Christian faith and Islam; relationships; and involvement in ministry. They also conduct pre-theology courses for young people – one week at the seminary and one week of practical work to give young people an understanding and insight into ministry.



## Pastor's job description with a difference!

Many of the people from the former Murat head-hunting tribes living along the rivers in the Sapulut region in the interior of Sabah (northern Borneo, also known as East Malaysia) are embracing the Christian faith. Head-hunting was outlawed under British rule. However, much of the tribes' lifestyle and many of their practices remain the same with their lives ruled by the rice cycle and hunting expeditions. They live as tribal groups in long-houses bordering the often fast flowing rivers.

Pastors who work among these people need to have the knowledge and ability of a skilled boatman and to be acquainted with the river and its dangerous rocky outcrops and unpredictable rapids. Because of this requirement, all of the pastors in this rugged and isolated region in which the BCCM works to share the Gospel are men who are themselves from the Murat tribal group. Their life and work is tough and isolated. New churches continue to be planted and to grow in these regions.



## Undocumented children

Imagine a life without an identity... a life with no rights to education, no legal rights to exist in a country. Welcome to the world of the "undocumented" children of Sabah! These children have arrived in Sabah with their parents... illegal immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia, who travel to Sabah in search of work. Most of the children will remain in Sabah until they are about 12 years of age, when they will be sent back to their home country.

The BCCM has seen the plight of these children, and together with the Presbyterian Church of Korea has established two schools: the Grace Centre on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu and the Good Samaritan school in the interior near Keningau. Over 200 children crowd into three classes on the second floor of a building tucked away in the back streets of Kota Kinabalu, and a further 207 students fill the three classes held in a small clean classroom in a makeshift village surrounded by thick bamboo and water-filled rice paddies on the outskirts of Keningau.

The parents of these children come from diverse faith backgrounds. They are aware that the schools have been established by the Christian church and that their children will be exposed to the Christian faith. Despite this, they are so thankful and eager for their children to gain an education. The schools are unable to provide for the vast number of children who desperately want to join their classes.

When the children leave the schools and return to their home countries they do so with the advantage of an education (limited though it may be) and the seeds of the kingdom of God planted in them through the teaching they have received in these centres of hope.

These snapshots give only a small picture of the BCCM, one of the overseas partner churches of the LCA that we have much to learn from as we travel together in mission.



## Notes and News

- The newly elected leader of the BCCM is Bishop Rev Dr Thomas Tsen Lip Tet
- Ms Jess Vun from the BCCM is one of the newly arrived scholarship-holders at Australian Lutheran College in Adelaide. During the next 18 months Jess will study for her Master of Theology degree.
- In June/July this year a five-member team from Melbourne Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF) will spend three weeks in Sabah with the Youth Ministry Department of the Bahasa Malaysia General Council of the BCCM.

Glenice Hartwich  
Project Officer, Board for Mission

# COUNTRY PROFILE: SABAH

**Sabah** is a Malaysian state located in the northern part of the island of Borneo.

**Capital:** Kota Kinabalu

**Size:** 76,115 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** estimated to be 2,449,389 (in 2000). Sabah has one of the highest population growth rates in the country due mainly to the immigration policy favouring Muslims. This has resulted in an influx of immigrants from Philippines and Indonesia, both legally and illegally.

**Make-up of population:**

- Kadazan-dusun 17.8%
- Bajau 13.4%
- Malay 11.5%
- Murut 3.3%
- Other bumiputra (indigenous) 14.6%
- Chinese 9.6%
- Other non-bumiputra 4.8%
- Non-Malaysian citizens 25%

**Language:** Malay is the national language spoken across ethnicities.

**Government:** Sabah is part of Malaysia's one-party unitary Islamic state, with the government dominated by the indigenous Muslim Bajau and Brunei Malay people.

**Economy:** Traditionally heavily dependent on lumber, based on export of tropical timber. Because of the increasing depletion of the natural forests and ecological efforts to save the remaining natural rainforest areas, palm oil has emerged as a more sustainable resource. Other agricultural products important in the Sabah economy include rubber and cacao. Tourism is currently the second largest contributor to the economy. Other exports include seafood and vegetables.

## Prawns and Green Curry (Hot and spicy)

- 3 tbs oil
- 1 kg green prawns (shelled)
- 3 shallots (peeled and sliced)
- 3 tbs red curry paste
- 2 cans of (Lite) coconut cream
- 1 tbs fish sauce
- 3 kaffir lime leaves (cut in thin strips)
- 500 gms green beans (cut in half)
- 1 red chilli (chopped finely)
- salt to taste

Heat oil in hot wok. Stir fry shallots; add in the chilli and red curry paste and stir until fragrant.

Add prawns and toss through. Add coconut cream.

Bring to boil and add green beans, kaffir lime leaves, fish sauce and salt to taste.

Cook for another minute.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

(You could make this dish go little further by adding other veggies thinly sliced carrots and red capsicum)

Serves 4-6



# mission in CHINA

Rev. Dr. Pang Ken Phin tells how she and her husband have been working with blessing in southern China. She invites readers to share in the blessings of their mission.

'Total mobilisation of believers in mission' is a popular slogan in contemporary Chinese churches. China is a vast field for mission. However, churches in China went through difficult times before China reopened its doors to the outside world in 1979. Since then, every overseas Chinese church has found its roots and rendered its services to help rebuild the church in China. As the Chinese say, "when you drink the water, you have to think about the source." Likewise, the LCA's partner in Sabah, the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) has been serving Hakka-speaking churches in the southern part of China. In the past few years, the BCCM has provided building funds, theological student scholarships and training of lay leaders and pastors.

My husband and I have entered the fourth year of our China ministry among the Hakkas. During these years, we have been blessed in many ways through working with local church leaders in areas such as visitation, Bible study, training of lay and clergy, and women and children's work. Building the capacity of women to be Sunday school teachers in every congregation is our ongoing vision and commitment. In addition, our ultimate goal is to train leaders who can train their own people.

There is a huge social gap between city and village. We have to think of ways to encourage the rich city congregations to help the poor rural congregations.

We have also found Diakonia (Christian service) to be an important part of mission in China. It will not only help to solve social problems such as poverty,

violence, drug addiction and other family or marital issues, but it will also help people to learn about Christianity. The church leaders we work with agree that Diakonia is a very important component of carrying out our mission. These days, we are also sharing the idea of establishing kindergartens and a home for elderly care. However, they are lacking finance and qualified personnel.

In general, the contribution of the church towards nation building is well recognised. In terms of social development, most government officials are quite open about co-operation with the church. Previously people used to say: "Adding one more Christian means losing one more Chinese." But now they say: "Adding one more Christian means gaining one more good citizen."

In Hakka areas in the southern part of China, there are a lot of opportunities and challenges for us to work together, both locally and internationally.

Will you be a partner and a blessed one in this particular ministry?

LCA has been working in recent years, takes its mission challenge seriously. Principal Dr Thu En Yu reports.

China... what a mission field! China's 1.3 billion people make up 22 per cent of the world's population. Sadly, 90 per cent of China's population have yet to come to salvation through Christ. As overseas Chinese Christians at Sabah Theological Seminary (STS), working in partnership with LCA, we realise that we have an important role to play in this great harvest field.

Our mission work in China in 2007 has included answering calls for assistance, providing Chinese students with study options, and sending lecturers to steer leadership training courses in China.

## Requests for assistance

The Christian population in China is growing rapidly, but workers are few. In order to meet China's need for trained workers in Christian ministry, STS has been able to offer human resources and training facilities during the past year. On many occasions, STS has been approached by the Religions and Culture Department, and the Christian Churches of China, about the possibility of becoming a training centre for church leadership development in China. These organisations have reached out to STS because Malaysia and China have enjoyed good diplomatic relationship at governmental and individual levels. Malaysian Chinese have the added advantage of being fluent in Mandarin, which is China's official dialect.

Given these external factors, the campus of STS is ideally positioned to offer a very favourable Christian environment for full-time and short-term theological students from China. Due to cultural similarities, these students have faced little difficulty in adapting to life in Malaysia. The response from students who have visited STS has been very satisfactory and enthusiastic.

Full-time students from China include bright and promising Wang Shi Jun, from Shandong (First Year, Master of Divinity) and Chen Hai Xia, from Guangdong (Third Year). For the new academic year, four new applications from various parts of China were received by STS. In August 2007, 15 youths and lay leaders from Heyuan, Guangdong, participated in a short-term study trip at STS. Many of them expressed keenness to return to study at STS.

## Leadership training courses in China

The STS sent two lecturers to conduct short-term Church Leadership Training courses in 2007. One went to Shandong in November, the other to Shanghai in December. The response was very good and people are enthusiastic to learn. Many express interest in furthering their studies at STS.

The expense of these mission ventures is considerable. The total outlay for the projects in 2007 was RM 46,000 (\$15,900 AUD).

The Chinese people have never before enjoyed a higher living standard. However, overseas Christian visitors to China would not fail to be amazed by the spiritual hunger of the Chinese people for God's Word. Let us continue to work hand in hand to touch lives and souls in this great land of China.