

BORDER CROSSINGS



global partners · local church



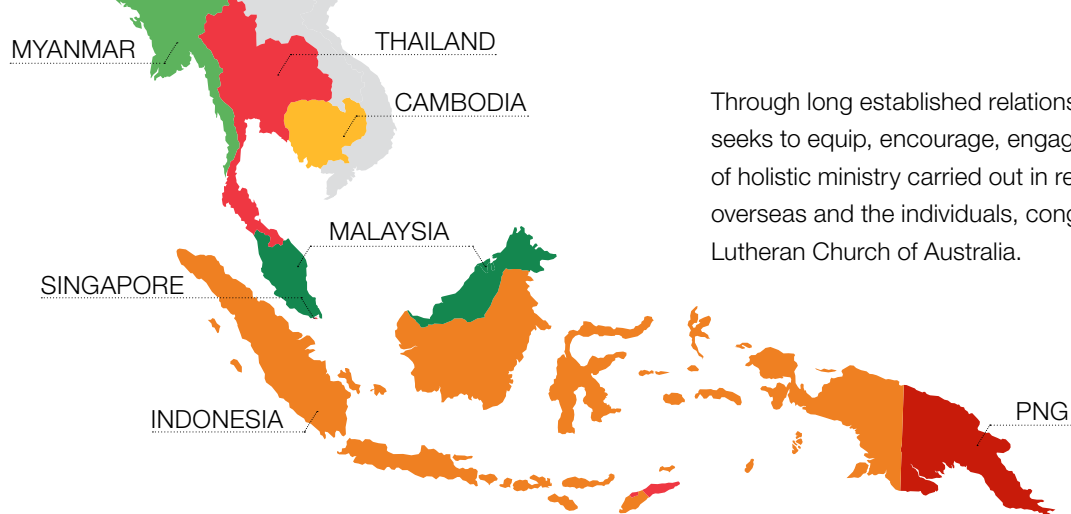
**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL
MISSION**

global partners · local church

ISSUE
APRIL 2019

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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.



Pastor Matt Anker

Assistant to the Bishop
– International Mission
Lutheran Church
of Australia

A FIRM FOUNDATION

While most of us were enjoying time with our families and a break from routines over Christmas–New Year, many of our church partners to the north were confronted with an entirely different reality.

Parts of Indonesia were rocked by earthquakes and devastated by tsunamis. Churches were bombed in the Philippines. Tensions continued to impact the lives of Christians in northern Myanmar. And the democratic process was further thwarted in Thailand. These things feel a world away and, while they evoke our sympathy, don't necessarily impact our lives.

In the midst of these 'routine' disasters, I was encouraged by the faithfulness of a congregation of the Gereja Kristen Luther Indonesia (GKLI) when I received news from them in January.

In an almost inaccessible part of Sumatra, Rev Swingly Sihotang has spent the past four years reaching out with the gospel, planting a new church. After years of fundraising, a church was built for this emerging congregation late last year. And even better, it was completed on 20 December, ready for them to celebrate Jesus' birth a few days later.

Unfortunately that same building was destroyed in a hurricane on 30 December!

While you can imagine how devastated congregation members were to lose their 10-day-old church building, soon they again gathered around God's word, rejoicing in the forgiveness and life that is theirs in Christ, albeit under a temporary roof.

Their faith, it seems, is built on a stronger foundation than their church was! And while the church is in ruins, they look forward to the day when God will once again answer their prayers and provide them with a home in which to worship.

Hurricanes, tsunamis, bombings and political unrest are the realities in which our partners are called to live out their faith. But these are also the things which give them a sense of urgency to share the message of forgiveness, life and salvation – because what is here today, could be gone tomorrow.

The experience of our brothers and sisters to the north can inspire and encourage you and me – to recognise the transitory nature of life and the urgency of sharing the gospel, because it has power to destroy even death itself.

How can you help?

If you would like to help rebuild this church, which would cost \$2100, please see the donations form at the back of this edition.

PROCLAIMING
THE

• GOSPEL •

NOMADS NO MORE

As our Australian and New Zealand societies increasingly thumb their nose at the gospel and treat any mention of Jesus as 'old hat', it can be difficult for us to understand just how welcome the gospel can be.

But that has been the experience of Pastor Hutagalung, who serves in the remote province of Jambi in southern Sumatra in Indonesia.

While serving a congregation of the Gereja Kristen Luther Indonesia (GKLI), Pastor Hutagalung became aware of a group of indigenous people in dire need. The Suku Anak Dalam or Sanak people are a nomadic people who live in forests and survive by hunting, foraging and trading. With no access to education, healthcare or income, these people are especially vulnerable as palm oil plantations replace Indonesian forest land.

Upon hearing of the needs of these people who live under tarpaulins in the bush, Pastor Hutagalung and his congregation reached out to them, offering both physical and spiritual care. They tended to the sick, fed the hungry and shared the good news of God's forgiving love with these people who had never heard the name of Jesus before. And just as the Holy Spirit has called, gathered and enlightened you and me through the preaching of the gospel, he did the same with these dear Sanak people, who received the good news with joy and thanksgiving.

Since that time God has continued to provide for both the physical and spiritual needs of these new brothers and sisters in the family of faith. The bishop of the GKLI has led mission teams to assist with teaching and evangelism. A church has also been built on the land the pastor helped them secure from the government because they have no means of getting into town for worship. On 26 August 2018, the first service was held in the Suku Sanak church and the Sanak people are looking to build permanent homes on this land with the church as the centre of their community.

These former nomads are wandering the forest no more. They have set down roots and found a home in the body of Christ. They now share the hope that we do as they have come to know Jesus crucified for the forgiveness of their sins. Together with their pastor they are now shining the light of Christ into the wider community and offering an eternal home to others in their area.

How can you help?

If you would like to help build homes for the Sanak people, which will cost a total of \$13,000, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

How are we helping?

LCA International Mission supports the GKLI seminary with an annual book grant for its library, offers a range of scholarships that are shared among all our partner churches in Indonesia, and has committed to establish a Lutheran study centre to assist with training Indonesian pastors.





PEACE, HOPE AND *a future*

by Nevin Nitschke

To meet James is to meet a whirlwind for Jesus! Confident, enthusiastic and with the deep warmth of hospitality, James is alive with God's Spirit and is a pastor in the Myanmar Lutheran Church (MLC).

James grew up in a village of 50 houses. Three of James's siblings died from disease. During this time, a village missionary evangelist challenged the family about what was important in their lives, 'What is it in life that could give you peace?', he asked.

It was James's mum who came to trust in Jesus first, followed by his dad. As his dad was dying, he requested that the local evangelist come and pray with him and he told his family of the deep peace he felt.

After his dad died, many in the small village turned against the family because of their belief in Jesus. In the mornings, it was common for James's family to find that their property had been damaged during the night. They were told to move away.

But every morning they would wake and spend time with the Lord. James's mother led them in prayer and devotion, always encouraging them.

Only five children from James's village attended school with him. According to tradition, his sister had to stay home with her mother. Most of the other village boys worked on their farms and saw little need for education. At school, James was told that his future was limited as he was 'nothing'.

However, his mum encouraged him to instead see what God could see in him, that there was hope and a future.

James felt lured to join the army because power over others was valued. But his mother told him she had promised his father that James would not join the army.

While at school in Year 9, James received a message that his mother was very ill. When he arrived home his mother could not talk or move and, as she was being taken to hospital, James was told to expect that she would die. As nothing could be done for her in hospital, James took his mum home.

James prayed, telling God that he didn't know what to do and that he didn't want to live if his mother died.

While reading Mark 12:1–27, the word 'living' kept playing on James's mind and, in a moment of emotion, he promised that if his mother lived, he would serve Jesus. A month later, his mother was healed.

Within a year, James went to Myanmar's largest city, Yangon, to study God's word. He has been in ministry ever since and knows the joy of serving Jesus. He understands that God has a plan for him and his children and that hope and purpose are gifts from God.

James received a short-term scholarship through LCA International Mission to study theology at the Australian Lutheran College in Adelaide for three months in 2012.

TRANSFORMED
BY THE
GOSPEL

How can
you help?

If you would like to support guest lecturers who are equipping those in ministry in Myanmar through teaching and exploring Lutheran distinctives with them, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

How are
we helping?

LCA International Mission in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Mekong Mission Forum support the building of theological capacity of the four Myanmar churches in the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar.

**PARTNERING
WITH THE**

• GOSPEL •

MAY THEY BE ONE...

by **Pauline Simonsen**

Visiting Myanmar for the first time – a country only recently opened to the west – was an exciting and slightly daunting prospect for me. I was invited to be a guest presenter at the Biblical Lutheran Women Conference in Yangon in November 2018, hosted by the Federation of the Lutheran Churches in Myanmar and co-sponsored by LCA International Mission.

I had many questions. How open was the country after decades of military rule? How 'free' were the people? What could I possibly share with people who had suffered deprivation and repression for so long?

As it turned out, my few days in Yangon with 38 women from four different Lutheran churches were wonderfully blessed. The locals I met were warm, gentle and courteous, smiling and gracious, especially with newcomers like me!

Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a large South-East Asian country with a population of 54 million people belonging to more than 135 ethnic groups and speaking more than 100 languages. The people are primarily Buddhist, with Christianity at around six per cent of the population. While the country is rich in natural resources, including gems and minerals, much of this wealth is held by supporters of the military junta and the income gap between rich and poor is one of the world's widest. The first free elections of 2015 established the democratic government of Aung San Suu Kyi, though the military remains a powerful presence in the country.

The theme for our conference was 'Gifts for God's Church: Spiritual Gifts and Christian Vocation', a topic close to the women's hearts as they sought to understand better their own calling as Christ-followers in this complex, highly structured, traditional culture. And a deeper context was a prayer for unity among these people from Lutheran churches with very different backgrounds, who come from differing people groups and very diverse geographical regions. Even the languages used among conference attendees differed. How could God bring unity in just a few days?

And yet the Holy Spirit did just that. As we made crafts, shared God's word, prayed and sang and laughed together, the Spirit revealed to us all how we are one in our Lord Jesus Christ, through our baptismal identity. We learned again that we are the family of God, sisters in the body of Christ, and that, when one part of the body hurts, we all hurt.

One of the Mara women shared how she needed to go before village elders on behalf of her community, asking for fellowship and the right to go on living in the village as a minority people group. So we prayed for our sister in her difficult and dangerous calling.

God used all this to knit us closer together as his family. So many prayers were answered for me as I witnessed the wonderful work of God in drawing us all together – Kiwi, Aussies, locals from Myanmar – in his rich, glorious family. A communion of saints indeed!



How can you help?

**If you would like to support
the Biblical Lutheran Women
Conference in Myanmar, please
refer to the donation form
on the back of this edition.**

How are we helping?

**LCA International Mission, in partnership with the
Mekong Mission Forum, provides financial support
for a woman from the LCA/NZ to conduct Biblical
teaching at the conference in Myanmar.**




**DWELLING
IN THE**

• **GOSPEL** •


TO SPEAK OR NOT TO SPEAK?

St Francis of Assisi is often credited with having made one of the most influential comments of all time about evangelism: 'Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words'.


Although there's no evidence he actually said this, it's become a popular catchcry and brought relief to those who feel burdened by the call to mission. It makes evangelism less confronting, but is it true?


 **Read John 13:34–35 and 1 John 3:16–18.**

People often refer to verses such as these in support of a 'wordless' evangelism, but is that what Jesus and John are talking about? **Check out 1 Peter as well, but note 3:15.**

 **What does Romans 10:13–17 say about the necessity of words in the task of mission?**

In one sense you and I are billboards for Christ, bearing witness to the hope we have in him by the way we live.

 **See 2 Corinthians 2:15–16.** And we've all heard people use the 'hypocritical behaviour of Christians' as an excuse not to believe. But are people coming to saving faith by observing our way of life? Our behaviour can be a stumbling block to faith, but does the growth of God's kingdom depend on the holiness of our lives?

 **Read Romans 7:7–25.** How does Paul's experience help us here?

What are we called to bear witness to? Ourselves and our transformed lives? Or to Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins? In the midst of Paul's despair over the need to be delivered from this body of death, who and what does he proclaim in verse 25?

Think of the great evangelist John the Baptist who saw Jesus and boldly proclaimed, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (**John 1:29**).

Without question, he was a righteous man of God but to whom did he point for hope?

 **See also John 3:30.**

People often feel nervous about sharing the good news of what God has done for them in Christ. We worry we don't have the right words. We feel guilty because we haven't got our lives together and so wonder what sort of witness we would be. And then there's the ever-present fear of rejection, ridicule, and shame.

All too often we focus on the wrong thing in sharing the gospel – ourselves and not Jesus. If I waited until I got my act together to share Jesus' promises with anyone, I would never do it! But the good news is God loves me in Christ even though I am a mess! And that is precisely the message that has the power to save.

Do you struggle to share your faith? Do you feel guilty about not grabbing the opportunities God has provided for you to point others to Jesus? Well here's the good news – **you are forgiven in Jesus' name for these very failures.** Your failures have not stifled his mission one bit.

So be encouraged and give it a go – even if you're scared of failing. Just as Jesus lives in you and leads you in living your life as a renewed child of God, so too he will be with you as you speak with people and share **with words** the forgiveness, healing and peace he alone gives. It doesn't have to be complicated or polished but you can be sure that as you share God's saving work in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will be at work calling them to faith in the promises of God and to new life in Jesus' name.

For a more detailed version of this study, go to www.lcamission.org.au/category/resources/bible-studies/



TRAINING
IN THE

• GOSPEL •

Teaming up for ministry education

My name is Emmanuel Som Yalamu. I am an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELC-PNG). I am originally from Siassi District, one of the 17 districts of ELC-PNG. I am married to Linda and we are blessed with three children, Samarita, 12, Petryn, 8, and Roland Dean, 1.

I currently serve as a New Testament lecturer at Martin Luther Seminary (MLS) in Lae, PNG, a position I hold after graduating from the University of Divinity with a Master of Theology degree in March 2015. Since June 2018, I have been studying on another scholarship from two LCA congregations and LCA International Mission for a PhD.

Since the establishment of ELC-PNG in 1977, only five pastors have completed a doctorate, of which two have passed away, the late Rev Dr Kigasung, who was awarded a PhD in Historical Theology and the late Rev Dr Kemung, who was a PhD in Missiology. Two further pastors are currently serving the church, Rev Dr Rupulga, who is a Doctor of Ministry in New Testament, and Rev Dr Gwayaweng, who has a PhD in Christian Education. Last month the ELC-PNG Head Bishop, Rev Jack Urame, graduated with a PhD in Social Sciences.

Rev Dr Rupulga is Principal at MLS and Rev Dr Gwayaweng is Head of

Practical Theology at Pacific Theological College in Fiji. Of the five doctorate holders, two were sponsored by LCA International Mission – Rev Dr Rupulga and Rev Dr Urame. I am privileged to currently be the third doctorate scholarship holder sponsored by LCA International Mission.

Furthermore, a new partnership has begun between MLS and Australian Lutheran College (ALC). This partnership's purpose is to work towards developing a Master of Theology coursework program for MLS. The partnership was sparked by a recent visit by ELC-PNG executives to the LCA and ALC in Australia. This started a series of discussions between LCA International Mission/ALC and ELC-PNG Overseas Affairs/MLS, resulting in a return visit by ALC Principal, Rev James Winderlich, and ALC Dean of Studies, Rev Dr Stephen Haar, to MLS last year. This partnership is in its planning and implementation stage.

Since its establishment in 1966, MLS has been offering the Bachelor of Theology as the highest academic degree. The partnership with ALC aims to identify MLS lecturers who already have a Master's degree in a theological area to go through a Research Methodology course.

Those who pass the post-graduate certificate with high achievements may apply for a PhD program at ALC. Currently at MLS, there are no doctorate holders in the areas of Old Testament Studies, Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, and Pastoral Theology. Through this partnership with ALC, MLS will be able to upgrade the qualifications of its lecturers to the stage where offering Master of Theology degree coursework will be plausible.

How can you help?

If you would like to support Emmanuel when he visits Australia through providing meals and hospitality or if you would like Emmanuel to speak with your congregation, please contact Nevin at nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au or phone 08 8267 7334.

How are we helping?

LCA International Mission and two LCA congregation partners are financially supporting Emmanuel as he completes his studies.



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

- Emmanuel Som Yalamu from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, and his family as he continues to study his doctorate through Australian Lutheran College
- The women who recently attended the Biblical Lutheran Women Conference in Myanmar. As they go back into their home faith communities, may they continue to use the teaching they were given through this conference to strengthen their walk with their Heavenly Father

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.

- The people who are living out their faith in countries which face hurricanes, tsunamis, bombings and political unrest
- Those serving in ministry within the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar, as they share the gospel with people from a strong Buddhist background
- Pastor Hutagalung and the GKLI congregation who are reaching out with physical and spiritual care to the needs of people who live under tarpaulins in the Indonesian bush

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. 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 phone 08 8267 7300.

CAMBODIA – MEDICAL MISSIONS

This year the focus will be on an eye surgery medical team. Projects are divided into three phases – screening, surgery, post-operative care. The mission takes place in the first week of November 2019.

INDONESIA – TEACHING ENGLISH

Adbi Sabda seminary, located in Medan, North Sumatra, is looking for a couple to teach English during July and August.

MALAYSIA – TEACHING ENGLISH

Four schools for 'undocumented children' are looking for Australian teachers of English. Based in Sabah in East Malaysia, the role would be for at least two months during 2019.

PNG – GAUBIN HOSPITAL REPAIRS

A group of men will be travelling to Gaubin hospital on Karkar Island and to Ogelbeng Seminary in the PNG Highlands to do repair work for two weeks in July or August. Like to join us?



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.)

- ☐ Emmanuel Yalamu – Doctoral Studies Scholarship, **Papua New Guinea** \$ _____
- ☐ Guest lecturers from the LCA teaching on Lutheran distinctives in **Myanmar** \$ _____
- ☐ **Indonesia** Special Projects – building homes for the Sanak people \$ _____
- ☐ LWF Mekong Mission Forum, in particular the Biblical Lutheran Women Conference **Myanmar** \$ _____
- ☐ Rebuilding the GKLI church building in **Indonesia** \$ _____
- ☐ 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**

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 _____

- ☐ Please send me a receipt