



LUTHERAN
CHURCH
OF AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL MISSION

BORDER CROSSINGS



global partners · local church

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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.



CHRIST OUR VICTORIOUS INFINITE DELIVERER

This year began much as any other year in the office of LCA International Mission. By the end of January our calendar was filled with travel commitments to support our partner churches and some volunteer lecturers were eagerly preparing to teach internationally for the first time.

However, almost as soon as we farewelled our first lecturer to Malaysia, COVID-19 hit and the rest is a history you would be familiar with.

Physically cut off from those we are called to support, and with months of planning now rendered useless, we were forced to rethink what our call looks like in our radically changed world. We have included two stories in this edition which report on LCA pastors teaching internationally on our behalf – one pre-COVID and one during COVID – in order to give you an insight into how the work of mission has continued and, in some cases, flourished.

It reminds me of Joseph's story and how his 'disappearance' looked hopeless to human eyes. Yet God ultimately used it to deliver hundreds of thousands of people from starvation and death, and glorified his name and people among the nations.

The sense of hopelessness we first experienced when COVID shut down travel has given way to joy as we have reimagined how we support our partners in mission. We have discovered new opportunities that we may never have explored. For example, the virtual seminar on the Augsburg Confession (see page 4) was able to accommodate more than five times the number of students of an in-person seminar and opened up amazing opportunities for ongoing training among our partner churches. What an unexpected blessing!

Or how about the congregation which began when Lutheran Church in the Philippines President Rev Antonio Reyes was locked out of Manila and so went about evangelising the locals? This congregation now has 40 regular worshipping families and they want to name it 'Christ Our Victorious Infinite Deliver (COVID) Lutheran Church'! God surely is able to work all things for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28).

Whatever COVID has meant for you personally, we pray that you too have seen God's blessing among the loss and change that has consumed our lives. We also pray that you would have a renewed sense of God's power as he continues to build his church regardless of the obstacles. Remember Jesus promised that not even the gates of hell would prevail against his church (Matt 16:18) – little wonder COVID has posed him no great challenge!



Pastor Matt Anker

Assistant to the Bishop
– International Mission
Lutheran Church of Australia

PARTNERING
WITH THE

• GOSPEL •

Demonstrating God's heart for the vulnerable

by Grant Wildman and Elizabeth Bentley

COVID-19 has not just resulted in mass panic-buying of toilet paper, there have been other responses to the pandemic as well. Some of these have even been good news and Tatachilla Lutheran College at McLaren Vale in South Australia and the Lutheran Church in Cambodia have been part of one of those positive stories!

For the past seven years, Tatachilla students and staff have been visiting and building relationships with those living in Phum Krus village in Cambodia, in partnership with the Lutheran Church in Cambodia. Year 9 students have raised money for the village and some of the students, when in Year 11, have had the privilege to visit people there.

Once COVID-19 restrictions hit Cambodia, poor people in Phum Krus lost their jobs and, as they had

no access to government assistance, were in dire need of support, not just for toilet paper but for their daily food, too.

Staff from Tatachilla realised the urgency of human need due to COVID-19 in Cambodia. The effects of the pandemic, both direct and indirect, had given them and the students, the opportunity to explore and demonstrate the relevance of the gospel to every aspect of life, and the desire of God to bring healing and wholeness to every aspect of human activity.

The stage was set for the college to demonstrate God's heart for the vulnerable – the poor, widows, orphans, aliens and refugees – the spiritual gift of hospitality and Christianity's foundational values of generosity and compassion. Along with current students, a group of old scholars

who visited Cambodia two years ago was moved to join the efforts, demonstrating a service heart and the impact of visiting Cambodia.

Thanks to the fundraising led by staff and students, Tatachilla was able to meet the needs of 30 families through the provision of food packages. These were distributed by the Lutheran Church in Cambodia and have been a powerful testimony to people in the Phum Krus community. This has also been a blessing for us at Tatachilla Lutheran College, as we have had the opportunity to partner with and enable them – our brothers and sisters – as they share and demonstrate the love of Christ.

With the strength of the Holy Spirit, may we all continue to take opportunities to become more intimately connected to God's heart for all nations and all peoples.

How are we joining with God partnering in the gospel?

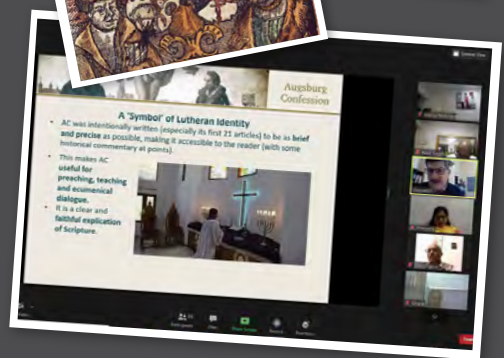
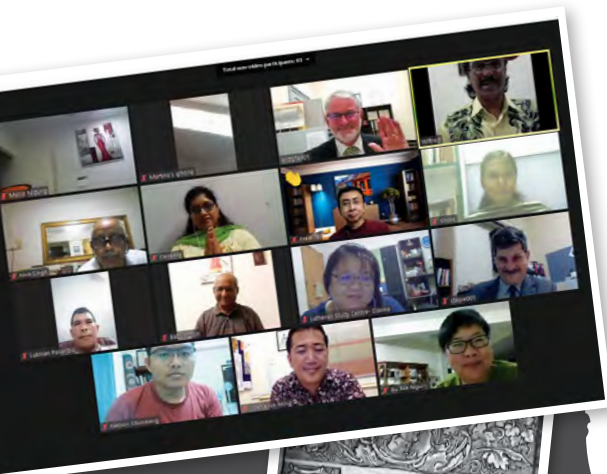
LCA International Mission works in partnership with Lutheran Education Australia and our overseas partner churches to provide opportunities for Lutheran schools, teachers and students from Australia to develop long-term, sustainable relationships and transformative service partnerships, which are mutually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

TRAINING
IN THE

• GOSPEL •



LEARNING ABOUT THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION – *2020-Style*

In September 2020, a much-anticipated seminar on the Augsburg Confession took place. But it was a very different event than the one originally planned.

The Lutheran Study Centre in Sabah, Malaysia, last year asked LCA International Mission for assistance in staging a seminar on the Augsburg Confession. The resulting event was set for June 2020 in Malaysia with speakers from Australian Lutheran College (ALC) due to attend.

But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seminar was delayed and held online. The scope of participants also changed dramatically. Instead of 20 church leaders attending from Malaysia, the webinar was opened up to all Lutheran congregations, pastors and church leaders.

More than 100 participants from around the world came together to study the Augsburg Confession and how it applies within Lutheran churches today.

The webinars were held over two evenings. The topics covered included a historical overview of the Augsburg Confession, its structure and articles, its role among Lutherans today, and what confessing the faith is and how the Confession helps us do it.

Rev Dr Wilfred J Samuel from Malaysia was delighted with the positive responses from participants. One said ‘... it touched on practical issues related to faith, the word, worship and mission. The historical overview helped young believers to understand and appreciate the context and struggles connected with the Augsburg Confession. One of the key issues raised and clarified was the relevance of the Augsburg Confession as against the Bible as the word of God. It was well explained that the Augsburg Confession is guided by the Scriptures to strengthen the faith of the Christian community.’

Guest speakers from ALC also reflected on the blessings of this opportunity. Rev Dr Stephen Pietsch appreciated being part of ‘a real theological dialogue with people, eliciting important questions and areas of discussion’ and considers that the seminar highlighted the need for teaching confessional Lutheran theology and spirituality in Asia.

Rev Dr Andrew Pfeiffer appreciated working and learning with fellow Lutherans to explore the pastoral implications of the theology we confess. ‘It is a joy to help people make the connection between the confessions and the word of God and see them gain confidence in bringing the word and Lutheran theology to congregational life’, he said.

Rev Samuel says that many participants have since requested more webinars in future, something the Lutheran Study Centre in Malaysia and LCA International Mission are keen to facilitate.

How are we training
in the gospel?

LCA International Mission partners with Australian Lutheran College to provide lecturers to train pastors and lay people from our overseas partner churches in Lutheran theology.

How can you support this
training in the gospel?

While we are unable to send lecturers overseas at this time, if you would like to support the purchase of Lutheran theological material for the Lutheran Study Centre in Malaysia, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.



LEARNING AND TEACHING *as a reconciled child of God*

by Rev Juliman Harefa

I was blessed to have the opportunity to attend a Biblical Reconciliation workshop in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra, in 2019. These workshops aim to equip and encourage pastors and teachers in Indonesia, and are offered as a service of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

The workshop was based on six lessons:

- Remember whose you are
- Repent before God
- Receive God's forgiveness
- Confess to another person
- Forgive as God forgave you
- Restore with gentleness

These six lessons form part of Christian doctrine, as described in Luther's Small Catechism. During the workshop we studied these topics as they provide direction for daily life, especially in reconciliation. The course was designed in a way to present questions for discussion, supported by many Bible passages. An integral part of the course was to consider how the passages from the word of God applied to each question.

As students in the workshop, we worked in both small and large groups, asking questions, sharing opinions and being actively involved in discussions. I was learning as an individual student, as well

as how to teach the material – coaching people struggling with specific conflict or preparing for mediation and reconciliation.

The training I received from this workshop has impacted on my life as a Christian, as well as in my role as a teacher of theology classes in English. It helped me realise that I have been in conflict with God, since the time of Adam and Eve. It also taught me that, as a Christian, I am reconciled with God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, his only Son. I also realised that I am called to share God's love by teaching.

This year I have two classes to teach, each with 30 students. My teaching is from the book, *Go and Be Reconciled, What Does This Mean: A Bible Study on Reconciliation reviewing Luther's Small Catechism*. The topics in this book are the ones I studied in the workshop. The classes I teach aim to help my students realise that they have also been in conflict with God, since the time of Adam and Eve, but that they are reconciled to God, and to one another, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

TRANSFORMED
BY THE
• GOSPEL •

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

LCA International Mission has partnered with LCA Reconciliation Ministry to provide short-term scholarships and workshops for our partners in Biblical Reconciliation Ministry.

How can you support this work?

If you would like to support Biblical Reconciliation Ministry workshops in Indonesia, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

STORIES OF MISSION

◦ TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH ◦

AROUND THE GLOBE



THE LITTLE CHURCH THAT'S GROWING 'TOO FAST'

by Pastor Matt Anker

Some years ago a Congolese member of my former congregation came to me with the news that her eight siblings, whom she thought had been killed along with her mother, had been found alive and living as refugees in Burundi.

Concerned for their wellbeing, I rang Glenice Hartwich at LCA International Mission and she gave me the contact details for Pastor Emile Nkurunziza, whom she met years earlier and whom the LCA had supported in his theological studies.

At the time Burundi was engulfed in civil conflict and the streets of the capital were blockaded, with the wounded left to die where they lay. Upon receiving my request to help, Pastor Emile ventured out into the conflict to find the children, demanding to be let through a checkpoint, declaring himself to be a 'soldier of Christ'. He gathered up the children, took them into his home and cared for them in the years ahead as we worked to bring them to Australia.

At the time I wasn't to know that Pastor Emile would become a dear friend and that I would have the privilege of teaching in his church. Nor did I know that I would follow Glenice upon her retirement and be privileged to continue to support pastoral training in this tiny Lutheran church through an annual gift of \$5000 dollars.

Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church of Burundi was founded by a returning refugee who had heard Lutherans preach in Tanzania when he sought refuge there during the genocidal violence of the 1990s. Having his eyes opened to the gospel for the first time, this former Roman Catholic couldn't help but share the unconditional love and mercy of God in Christ with his neighbours and so the church grew. For years they were content worshipping in schools, under tarps or wherever they could find space to gather. But then the government

decreed that all churches must have a permanent place of worship and they were at a loss as to how that would happen.

A Burundian refugee by the name of Sifa Mireye, an LCA member in Shepparton, heard of their situation and started fundraising to help her 'family' back home. Once land was purchased and the structure started to rise from the ground, the congregation began worshipping in the construction site to fulfil the government's order. By God's grace and the generosity of his saints, the building will be completed by the end of the year.

The biggest challenge the congregation now faces is that it is growing so fast, the church will be overflowing with people as soon as the building opens! As members continue to reach out with the gospel, Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church is being overwhelmed wherever it plants congregations. Their prayer – and ours – is that some day these new communities will be able to worship under permanent roofs as well.

It is incredibly humbling that at its recent AGM, Hope formally acknowledged the LCA as its 'best friend' as a result of the very small annual assistance we provide them to train pastors each year. May God continue to multiply our meagre offerings to the blessing of many in Burundi.

How can you support this work?

Your donation to LCA International Mission will help provide an annual scholarship to Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church of Burundi to assist in training pastors. Please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.



TEASURED CHANCE TO SHARE A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

by Pastor Michael Lockwood

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM) is one of four Lutheran synods in Malaysia. Its focus is on working with the Tamil people of Peninsula (West) Malaysia.

Malaysia is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation. The Malay majority are Muslims and it is a crime to convert Malays. Those Malays who do convert to Christianity have to practise their new faith in secret, otherwise they will lose many privileges and be sent off to re-education camps. Yet among ethnic minorities such as the Tamils, there are many Christians and churches which are allowed to operate openly. For the Tamil Christians, the greatest challenge is to lead other Tamils out of the Hinduism they brought with them from India.

The ELCM is a small synod of about 30 pastors, so it does not have its own seminary. Instead, their pastors go through a five-year training program at an interdenominational Bible college. The college has only one Lutheran on its faculty. As a result, their general theological knowledge is good but they have a limited understanding

of Lutheran theology. This has led their Bishop, Solomon Rajah, to reach out to the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) International Mission. His hope is that the LCA will send scholars several times a year to run seminars for his pastors, strengthening them in Lutheran teaching.

As part of this new initiative I was invited to give a Lutheran response to Pentecostalism. This provided a wonderful opportunity to delve into the Scriptures, explore a Lutheran understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit and to grapple with questions that the Pentecostal movement has raised for the Church as a whole.

Bishop Solomon retired this year but Bishop Steven Lawrence hopes to continue this initiative into the future.

Malaysia is a beautiful country and I experienced a warm welcome. The ELCM pastors speak good English and I found them to be good humoured and not at all shy about coming forward with their opinions. This led to very robust and fruitful discussions.

As always when I travel overseas to teach, I found that my perspective was broadened and enriched. Whenever we engage with Christians overseas in this way, they bless us just as much as we are able to bless them.

How are we joining
with God as he
proclaims the gospel?

LCA International Mission provides lecturers to teach and learn from our partner churches and seminaries.

How can you
support this work?

While we are unable to send lecturers overseas at this time, if you would like to support the purchase of Lutheran theological material for the Lutheran Study Centre in Malaysia, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.



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

- those who attended the Augsburg Confession seminar. As they made the connection between the Lutheran Confessions and the word of God, may they gain confidence in bringing the word and Lutheran theology to congregational life
- the Tamil Christians in Malaysia, as they lead other Tamils out of the Hinduism they brought with them from India
- the strength of the Holy Spirit, that we may continue to take opportunities to become more intimately connected to God's heart for all nations and all peoples

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.

- those who have attended Biblical reconciliation workshops which teach them as Christians to be reconciled to God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, his only Son, and one another
- Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, as members continue to reach out with the pure word of the gospel. We pray too that some day, the new communities they are planting will be able to worship under permanent roofs

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*

AUSTRALIA

LCA International Mission hosts people from overseas in a North Adelaide unit and would appreciate assistance with cleaning between guests up to six times a year. Cleaning products are supplied.

MALAYSIA

The Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM) is seeking IT support personnel in the areas of graphic design, web design, copyright and content creation to assist its congregations to go digital.

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**.

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

Being a volunteer congregational representative for LCA International Mission in your home congregation involves encouraging others in mission by sharing resources with your congregation and promoting LCA International Mission opportunities. Information is regularly emailed to LCA International Mission congregational representatives to help them in their role.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

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.



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

... 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.)

- ☐ Scholarships for pastoral students in **Burundi** \$ _____
- ☐ Library support for the Sabah Theological Seminary, **Malaysia** \$ _____
- ☐ School partnerships and associated visits and projects in **Cambodia** \$ _____
- ☐ Reconciliation Ministry training 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**

- ☐ Please send me a receipt

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.

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 _____