

# 40 DAYS



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

*global partners · local church*

a Lenten devotion and prayer guide

Stories of LCA International Mission with our overseas partner churches

We are part of the body of Christ and we each contribute a part, a skill, a gift to that body.

The stories you read in this devotion book are the result of people working in partnership with the rest of Christ's body. LCA International Mission partner with, Australian Lutheran College, Grow Ministries, schools, Lutheran Education, Reconciliation Ministries, Cross cultural Ministries, congregations, Women's ministries, WyCliffe Bible translators, Interserve as well as German, European and American churches to walk alongside our Asian and PNG partners. We proclaim the Gospel of God's love to people in our communities who, as yet don't know Jesus. We learn from each other.

Evangelists, lecturers, teachers, pastors, farmers, accountants, workers and healers use their gifts voluntarily because the body has one thing in common – they live in God's grace and love and want to encourage each other in our Christian hope.

We partner as Lutherans, not through a superior ideology but because it's the family, the body, God has placed us in.

God invites us all to join Him in His mission of love. We are called to evangelise, serve, forgive, hope and love.

As you read these stories pray! As with all journeys and relationships there are struggles and disappointments as well as overwhelming joys. Pray with thankful hearts and trusting whispers.

....join us!

*You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31*



*Matt Anker, Erin Kerber and Nevin Nitschke*

# Cambodia

Buddhism is the main religion in a country with 16 million Khmer speaking people. The Lutheran Church in Cambodia is small with around 400 baptised followers. The church is in 4 communities with a city church in Phnom Penh.



**INTERNATIONAL MISSION**  
*global partners · local church*

I first met 25 year old Soc Heath at the Rainbow hostel in Cambodia. James, the western name he uses after watching James Bond movies, taught himself guitar via YouTube. James plays guitar during the worship times. "Music is a big part of the Khmer culture and we use many original songs in worship. My parents died when I was young and I grew up in a Christian orphanage."

"At primary school it was difficult to talk to other students about Jesus because they heard that killing was okay in the Bible. They discriminated against anyone who was Christian – Now they think Christians are good because Christians supported them after a flood 3 years ago."

"The orphanage, run by a Korean church, wanted me to be a pastor. I attended Bible College for 3 years while working at a restaurant in Kampong Chhnang. While wearing a Bible school t-shirt, one of the ladies eating there (Sally Lim) asked if I was a Christian. She said they needed English teachers at Phum Krus. I worked there as an intern in 2012. I came to Phnom Penh in 2015 to study for a Bachelor of 'English in Communication'. I speak Khmer, Korean, Japanese and English. I am currently working in a private school as an academic co-ordinator where I help teachers type exams and explain to parents why their child has low scores."

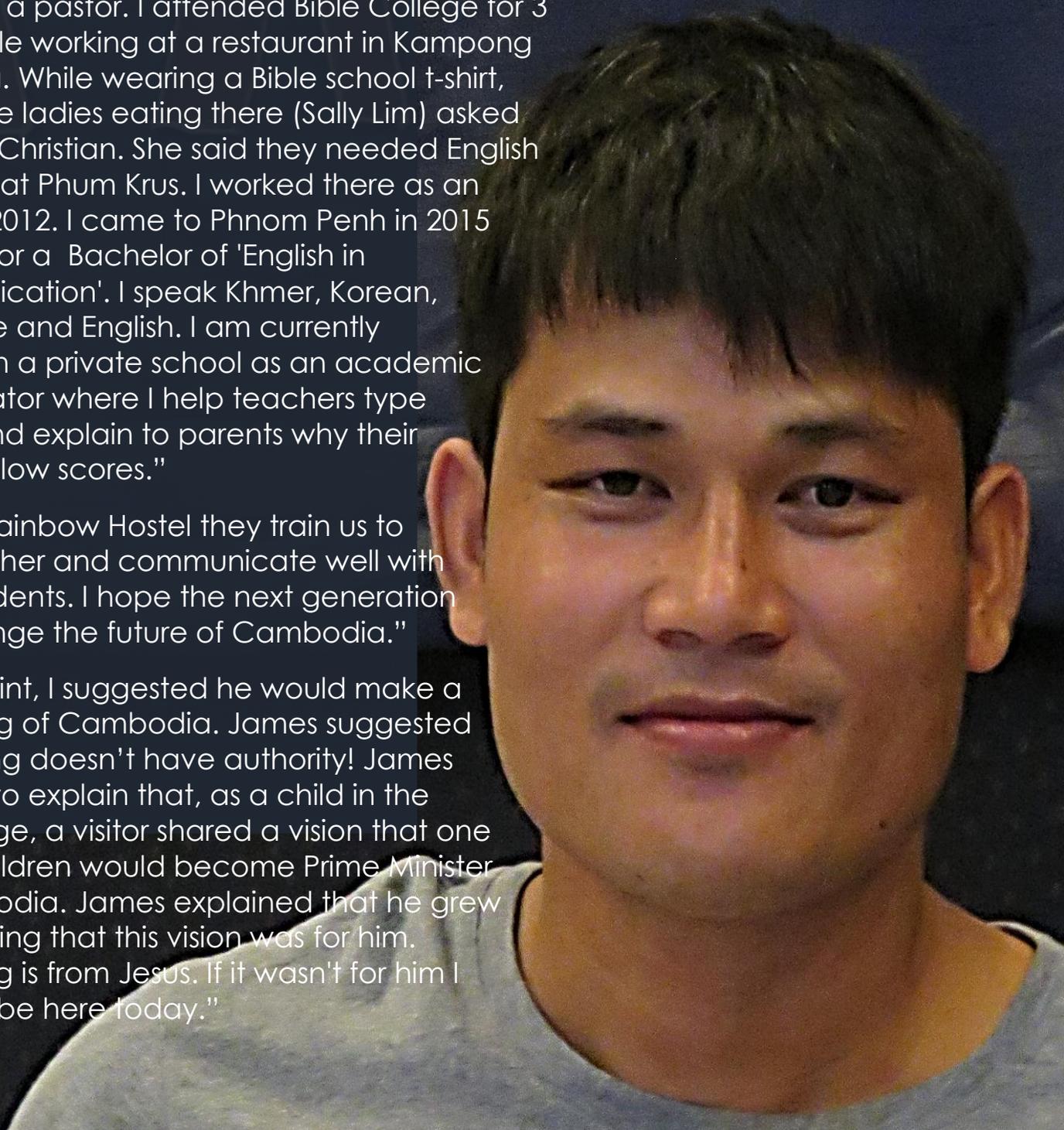
"At the Rainbow Hostel they train us to live together and communicate well with other students. I hope the next generation can change the future of Cambodia."

At this point, I suggested he would make a good King of Cambodia. James suggested that a King doesn't have authority! James went on to explain that, as a child in the orphanage, a visitor shared a vision that one of the children would become Prime Minister of Cambodia. James explained that he grew up believing that this vision was for him. Everything is from Jesus. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be here today."

Ask God to grow young church leaders in Cambodia. Pray He gives them dreams and visions for their country and their faith. Pray to share your dreams and visions.

1

# James





Pray for the people who have served or been served in Cambodia and the blessings received. Pray that God's grace and love touches the hearts of young believers.

2

Never be surprised how God will use you! After my children had participated in mission trips I felt God had put on my heart to one day be involved in His service overseas.

I received a message from Erin at LCA International Mission, asking if I would help the Lutheran Church in Cambodia with bookkeeping. God had a plan, but I never envisaged it would involve using my experience as a bookkeeper in Cambodia.

'Trust in me,' God said. 'I have it all planned.' He reminded me of this on arrival in Phnom Penh. I found myself lost in a tuk tuk late in the evening. I trusted Him and, thanks to an English-speaking driver and technology, I arrived at my hotel.

My role was to help the Church in Cambodia with bookkeeping, in doing so, I received many blessings. I spent the majority of time at City Church, Phnom Penh, which includes tertiary students housed at Rainbow Hostel. The opportunity to worship, commune and participate in gatherings and prayer with the church, was a privilege. It was amazing to watch faces light up as they talked about their faith.

I was able to see and experience church planting in Cambodia with visits to Phum Krus and Kandal. Ministry centres were established in these villages to connect with children through teaching English after School, and with adults through medical clinics. The commitment and love of the staff was amazing.

Serving God in Cambodia was a blessing to my spiritual life, providing me with a renewed vision of mission and a broader understanding of how to share His love in practical ways– and I am thankful that He called me!



**Bronwyn Norsworthy**

Kim Lita is a young, bubbly, intelligent lady with, what we were to discover, a disarming and beautiful honesty. "I was born in 1995 in Sihanoukville. My older sister has a three year old daughter. Second sister is pregnant. I grew up in Buddhist family. When I was young, I went to church because they gave me gifts and I learnt English and joined worship on Sunday. I finished high school and went to Phnom Penh. I lived alone and was not involved in church. I am studying Pharmacy.

A friend who was staying in the Rainbow Hostel asked me "do you want to live in the church?" I didn't want to learn anything about God. I said yes because as a single girl, it is not safe for me to live alone. When I came here for the first time I felt like everyone have a love. I remember, a foreigner, she hugged me so warm. After that I tried to hug them like they hug me.

Pastor Sreyleak asked me 'do you want to be a Christian?' I say 'I am considering. And even now I'm still considering. I think I might believe in God already. At night five months ago I dream. I saw a big flood and saw someone wearing white clothes, just like Jesus in the story. The flood is really big and everyone will die. And then immediately the flood is down – Because of the word of God. God is carrying one boy in his hands. Everyone was singing. When I get up I say the words unintentionally "I believe in God" This is my real dream. It still gives me goosebumps.

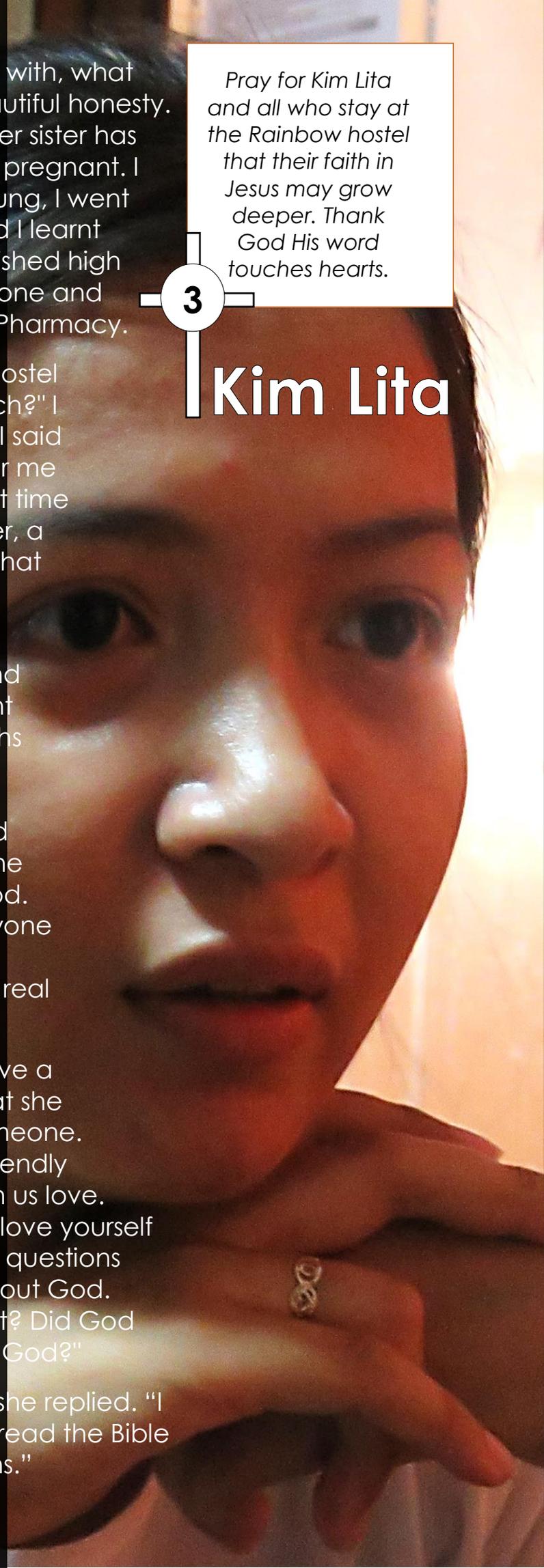
In this place I feel home. Sister Sreyleak gave a Bible to me. She said this is the first time that she has given a Bible and opened it up for someone. She opened the Bible for me. She is very friendly and caring. I love her so much. God teach us love. Buddha also teach love but sometimes to love yourself For God love yourself like others. I still have questions about God. Sister Sreyleak teaches me about God. Sometimes I ask a question "does God exist? Did God really make the word? Why you believe in God?"

I asked if she asked God questions? "no." she replied. "I think you should." "I should? - I will. I don't read the Bible but I listen and sing. I ask so many questions."

*Pray for Kim Lita and all who stay at the Rainbow hostel that their faith in Jesus may grow deeper. Thank God His word touches hearts.*

3

# Kim Lita



# Indonesia

Indonesia has a population of 267 million people. Bahasa Indonesian is the main language and Islam the main religion. LCA International Mission works closely through the Lutheran World Federation National Committee Indonesia with the 13 Indonesian Lutheran Churches.



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**  
*global partners · local church*



Ask God for volunteers to come forward to teach English in our partner churches. Pray that the young women training at Bibelvrau return to their communities preaching Jesus love.

4

## John & Marilyn Morgan

John and I have taught English at the Bibelvrau school for four years and each time we feel we are experiencing a little slice of heaven and unconditional love.

Two students are assigned to look after us. As well as clean our house, they cook and bring over a variety of delicious healthy meals enhanced with Indonesian spices, and of course the ubiquitous bowl of rice. Hardly a moment goes by when we don't hear the sound of angels. The girls are either practising for choirs, or singing as they tend their gardens.

The students know their parents have made a big sacrifice to send them to the Bibelvrau and they put their heart and soul into their learning. Despite having to get up at 4:30am to clean, cook and do fitness, they are bright, cheerful and generally full of life and energy.

We teach for three hours in the morning and one and a half in the late afternoon with a three hour break during the hotter part of the day. It is situated in the village of Laguboti. We feel quite safe walking by ourselves to one of the nearby supermarkets, or further afield just to take in the sights and sounds of the children on their way to school, the mothers hanging the washing on the fence, or the business people in shops. We are always greeted with a friendly 'salamat pagi'. We were thrilled this year to be able to take Mandy, another teacher, with us. At last someone else could relate to the fun times we have had during our four years there, and of course a third teacher made our load lighter. Mandy writes.....

The whole experience for me was fantastic - the setting in the mountains, the staff and pupils at the school, the classroom facilities, the gardens, the town and the food were all amazing - I always felt safe and respected.

A photograph of three young boys in orange Pramuka uniforms standing outdoors. The boy in the foreground has a name tag that says "PRAMUKA". They are looking towards the camera with serious expressions. The background shows trees and a blue structure.

*Pray for our Australian and Indonesian school partnerships. Pray that our schools share their gifts and strengths and learn from each other.*

5

## Rina Tobing

I'm Rina Tobing, a 12th grade student at HKBP P SIANTAR High School. I have always believed in Jesus. I have a daddy who is the best angel God gave me. I also have a sister and brother. Nothing can replace dad in our lives. He has raised us alone for more than 13 years. My parents divorced on my fifth birthday. I will never forget. My mum, in anger, threw glass at my father. He dodged but my hand was scratched by the glass fragments. From the moment I blew out candle number 5, 2nd February 2007 at 14:08 pm, I did not see my mum again. Dad taught us to love, not hate our mum.

Mum did not know how great my dad's sacrifice was. Dad painted when he had a job. The work was seasonal and in the afternoons he cleaned the house. Jesus gave him good health so he could raise his children.

The life we faced was full of painful obstacles. In Elementary school I would see my friends given pocket money and enjoy kisses and hugs from their mums. I would cry and ask God why I didn't have a mum? At school they said I was ugly, poor, stupid and unlucky. It made me fall into sadness. I might not have been able to face all this without Jesus. I didn't want to trouble dad but found the closer I got to God, the more I felt his love. The older I get the more I understand dad's sadness and then try to help. We are often hungry. Sometimes when there was little food available, I'd tell my dad I'd eaten at school. Because I endured hunger, I was often sick. When dad heard that I would try to get a scholarship to attend Udayana University in Bali, he shed tears of joy. One of my desires is to help my siblings finish their schooling. I want to open an orphanage for children.

Sometimes I smile so I don't show my sadness, because I know only Jesus can comfort me. I'm thankful to my family, teachers and friends who support me. When my teacher Mam Ellyda told me that our school has a partnership with Unity College in Australia, I prayed to God that I can visit.



Pray how our relationships with people can be impacted by respect and love. Ask God to shape your relationships.

6

**Clem Schmidt**

The end of their scholarship time in Australia was fast coming to a close and Jon Siragih and Jonriahman Sipayung had been requesting the visit more frequently and wanted to spend time with someone they admired and respected.

I knew that Clem was unwell, but after a chat with Ruth had arranged a time for the two Indonesian pastors to catch up with Clem and Ruth at the Tanunda Lutheran Homes.

Respect expresses itself in interesting ways and, after memories were recalled and pondered on, Jon and Jonriahman asked if they could pray with Clem and most importantly for them, if Clem would pray for them.

What made this visit more remarkable was that it had been 34 years since Clem and Ruth had served in Pematang Siantar, Sumatra - working with pastors and lay-leaders from 1980 to 1984. Their visitors today would have been very young boys at the time.

Ruth's calm and gentle presence of bringing God's peace was tangible during our time together.

Clem passed away several weeks after the visit, aged 85.

Time fades memories. Much of what we think we do that is important quickly fades in the memories of those around us. Who we are in our relationships with people, whose love and grace we live by can clearly impact on and shape lives for generations – as I found out during the visit with Clem and Ruth.

Trust God to use your life to touch the hearts of others.



Pray for the children of Debora that they may continue to grow in faith as they are taught about Jesus. Thank God for Rosemary's faithfulness to the people of Debora.

7

Rosemary Winderlich

For 2 decades, Lutheran Women of Australia have supported Debora and for that time Rosemary Winderlich has been the follow up presence of that support. This year Jo Veerhuis and Chris Stott joined Rosemary on the visit to the home in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Spending even a few minutes with Rosemary, it becomes clear she has a passion and a heart for Debora. The following offers great insights into Debora and the Indonesian culture.

*June 28* Good trip, roads improved over 6 years. Home at Silangge (Debora) in about 10 hours.

*June 30* Went with kids to Silangge service... in our hall or games room... "aule" The little church of this small village is being rebuilt.

*June 1* Now playing UNO with Andri, Vera, Yanti, Herda, Jo and Chris. The card games teach English. Usually about half the children are orphans, whose pastors and parents have applied for a place here. The reason...poor and can't afford education, or can't be cared for.

*July 3* Devotions are at 5 am and again at 7pm, usually followed by an hour or two of choir practice.

*July 7* Music everywhere... a festival here today to raise funds for the new church... dancing, singing, camaraderie, food and worship. Near mealtimes, there is usually chillie and garlic being fried in the kitchen, and the smell of concentrated vapour drifts through the rooms.

*July 11* Jo, Chris and I are bursting at the seams with the utter privilege of being here, and all the love we are given. Now preparations for school; breakfast, jobs; chickens to be let out, dogs fed, porch and hall swept. They leave at 7 for school.



*Pray for Gloria as she continues her work of training pastors for the BNKP church on Nias Island. Pray for the Indonesian congregations in Australia.*

8

## Gloria Ndraha

Gloria Ndraha, a pastor and lecturer from STT Sundermann Seminary, Nias Island, was our 2019 Sabbatical scholarship guest. She writes...I feel grateful to have had the opportunity to attend this sabbatical leave. I can say that I did not have any heavy problems, even that my English is so limited. I was helped by many people and especially the staff of LCA. The Lohe Memorial library, and all the staff there made it a good place for me. It was easy to find the books and documents needed, and the librarians were very kind and helpful. My research topic, was The Leadership of the Women Pastors in BNKP. All the books and documents of the Lohe Library, especially relating to the thoughts of Luther regarding women in the church, offered new inspiration and clues to going deeper.

While in Adelaide I found some occasions to fellowship and work with ICFA (Indonesia Christian Fellowship of Adelaide), Pasadena, South Adelaide. I saw many charity works and church activities I was able to attend and become involved in. Ideas I may be able to use in my own church.

I want to thank the LCA for providing my scholarship, without them, this sabbatical leave would not be able to take place. I hope you continue to pray for me so I can finish and publish a small book on this research topic.

# Nick, Vivien & Ray

*Pray for the rural ONKP church and its leaders on Nias. Learning English is a way to open doors to education and communities outside of Nias. Ask God if He is calling you to volunteer.*

9

We were privileged to spend 5 weeks on Nias Island off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. Our introduction to Nias began with a trip to Teluk Dalam in the south of the island where we attended a 5 hour church service which included the Blessing of the Bell, the installation of Pastors, candidate Pastors and other church officials. It was unbelievably hot and all in the Nias language! As volunteers for LCA International Mission, we were to teach English to the Pastors and Assistant Pastors of the ONKP Church at Sirombu.

It was a wonderful experience and we met a group of enthusiastic and dedicated people. Everyone from the Bishop, General Secretary, Treasurer and Pastors took their lessons seriously. We were amazed that some participants had to travel one and a half hours by motorbike just to get to lessons. We taught from 9am to 1pm. We soon learned to live without internet or Wi-Fi and manage with erratic mobile data. Our accommodation was clean and comfortable with a Western toilet. The fact that there was no kettle, fridge, wardrobe, hand basin, hot water and only sporadic air conditioning didn't matter. The food was basic and we were grateful our lunches at ONKP included vegetables and fruit. We were able to buy our own fruit at the local stalls and decided living without any dairy products wouldn't do us any harm.

We enjoyed our time immensely. We were treated like super stars with our photo taken everywhere we went! Our time was a lesson in humility and highlighted that we do not need all our Western comforts to live a productive and contented life.



Pray that partnerships may be a blessing to students, staff and families of Indonesian and Australian schools. Pray we learn a deeper love for God and his love.

10

## Faith Lutheran

To encourage our school community to think and act globally, last year 'Serving Indonesia with a Heart' (SIWAH) was founded. The vision for SIWAH, was to form a partnership between SMA HKBP 1 Tarutung and Faith Lutheran College, where each school community could serve the other and make a difference in the lives of our students.

In July 2018 the inaugural Faith visit saw six Year 11 Faith students, two staff and two parents visit Indonesia and the reciprocal partnership was successfully formed. During Week 6 the Faith Community were absolutely thrilled to return the hospitality by welcoming six guests from SMA HKBP 1 Tarutung in Indonesia.

During their time at the College, our guests immersed themselves in many classes, observing, taking notes and videoing Faith's teaching and learning practices.

When asked what they could take back to Indonesia and use in their teaching practices, Ms. Anna replied, 'I want to ask more questions of my students, rather than just tell them information. I want them to think about their learning more.'

Principal Steve Wilksch said 'As the College unpacks the Philosophy set by the International Baccalaureate®, SIWAH encourages our students to become internationally minded, understanding the world through the eyes of other people. SIWAH also gives real-life learning opportunities, encouraging students to celebrate and appreciate their similarities and differences in a global context. Through these relationships we have an opportunity to serve and learn from each other.'

'The Faith community prides itself on close staff and student relationships ..this is how a lot of our students benefit from their learning. I think one of the most powerful elements of their reciprocated trip to Australia was, that they were able to witness the sense of friendship in our Faith community... the Indonesian staff now want to replicate this in their school environment.' *Anneka Wilksch (Faith student)*



# Malaysia

Islam is the state religion and Malay the main language spoken in this country of 32 million people. The LCA has partnerships with 4 churches in both East (Sabah) and West Malaysia. These churches serve Malaysian, Chinese, Tamil and Orang Asli (Indigenous) people.



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

*global partners · local church*

Thank God for people who answer His call to serve as pastors, teachers and evangelists. Pray that God's Word is taught with passion and heart and not just words.

11

# Greg Lockwood

Greg was a volunteer lecturer at PCS Seminary, Sabah in October, 2019.

My course was an 'intensive' with third-year Diploma students. There were 15 of them, women and men in about equal numbers. The course was an in depth study of Luther's Small Catechism, reading it through in Bahasa and English, showing its biblical basis and including additional notes from the Large Catechism. I had sent outlines for the first three parts of the Small Catechism in advance, for the translator's benefit.

Quelen was a fine translator. Rarely was she stumped except during the sermon on Sunday morning, when I began by quoting C F W Walther's book on the Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel: "The Christian religion, in a word, is a religion of gratitude." She did not know what to do with the word 'religion,' but was fine when I switched to 'teaching.'

The students all had their Bahasa Bibles and Small Catechisms, so we had a good basis for teaching. All the students were attentive, model students, asking good questions, and obviously very devout. A challenge included the dogs across the road from the guest house that showed their displeasure whenever I set out for the classroom. Later I discovered a dog-free route. It has been a privilege and a joy to get to know the PCS seminary community, where all but one of the teacher families live on campus, everyone is gracious, thoughtful and appreciative, the children are delightful, and the singing excellent.



*Pray for Brother Lee as he serves God in his community. Pray new leaders may be raised up. Pray for Indigenous communities across the world that they may be respected.*

12

## Orang Asli

The Indigenous, Orang Asli, people of Malaysia know what it is like to be forgotten. In a town in the Malaysian countryside, Brother Lee gathers the 60 people of his congregation for

worship. Each time he addresses the congregation in front of him, he looks around him and begins with the words "Tonight we give thanks to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who has allowed us to gather together."

60 years earlier, Brother Lee attended an evening class run by visiting teachers who were there to share the Gospel. Mystified by the presence of visitors to their village, Brother Lee was attracted to the class out of curiosity. As Orang Asli, no one had previously shown any interest in them. Brother Lee was comforted on this night. Brothers and sisters from far away countries witnessed that God never abandons even the Orang Asli. Later, pastor Hans from Germany visited and because they were with a pastor, the small group of believers could venture out between 6 and 9 in the evenings, 3 nights a week. The group would put benches in an old van and would encourage people wherever they stopped to listen to the good news of Jesus. It was in these years that pastor Han gave guidance to leaders. "Thanks to God for these gatherings!"

Many of the young believers have now moved to the larger cities. Sixty people still form the heart of this church and brother Lee reminds his family of believers to "pass the gospel onto our children and persevere in bringing people to know Jesus." The Orang Asli are humble people who know hardships. The church runs youth camps and many community children attend, but more needs to happen. Brother Lee faces many challenges that our churches face as well as many of his own unique challenges as Indigenous people in a country with a muslim majority.

*Pray for Mirnawan and Chercehar. Thank God that our love is a reflection of God's love for us. Pray for God's Spirit to help you live God's love to others.*

13

## Mirnawan & Chercehar



The photo could have been taken anywhere on the globe. Two people looking at each other with knowing smiles as they shift a little closer together as they chat. Much has been written and sung about love. This story takes place in Pengkalan Hulu, Malaysia and tells of two people in love, with the arms of Jesus around them.

Mirnawan is a young Orang Asli (indigenous) man living in West Malaysia. He is familiar with the hardships of life and the struggles of being part of a minority in his own country. From a child he had practiced black magic and is familiar with its powers. Mirnawan came to know Jesus through a supernatural experience – he was released from demons and, after seeing the impact of God's Spirit on his family and on the life of the lady sitting next to him, Mirnawan says by 2015 he knew that 'Jesus was real for sure!'

Chercehar came to know Jesus in 2006 when an evangelist shared the gospel with her and a month later she says she came to know and love Jesus. The change in her life has been just as radical as Mirnawan's. Before she would sit at home by herself and experience loneliness – now, she wants to make friends because she senses the Christian 'familyness'. Mirnawan, 20 year of age, and Chercehar, 25 years of age, were friends since childhood ...and then 'accidentally fell in love'. He loves her because she has beautiful eyes. She loves him because he always encourages her and has kind words to say to her. They were married on 27 October 2016. The day we spoke to them we had just witnessed Mirnawan's baptism, along with 28 other people, at the church they attend in a small Malaysian community. In his words 'he wanted to fully surrender himself to Jesus'. It was an act of faith. They enjoy worship because they love to sing and hear the Word of God.

'Sometimes they find it difficult to be Christians in this community because the Christians sometimes do not set a good Biblical example for those in the community.' Perhaps love and love's challenges are the same the world over.

Whoever Jesus is 'in', he makes a difference.

*Pray for continued cooperation and support for our cross cultural congregations in Australia. Pray for ways to learn and grow together as we share the gospel.*

14

## Cross Cultural Ministry

What would bring 4 Malaysian pastors, 3 evangelists and chaplains and 7 lay leaders from Australia and New Zealand together in one place? The Lutheran Distinctive teachings of a Singapore Pastor, currently serving in New Zealand!

From July 8 to 12, 2019, Cross Cultural Ministry and LCA International Mission brought these participants together for Cross Cultural training at ALC in Mandarin. The 5 day course was led by Rev Dr William Chang. The key topic was "Lutheran Theological Identity". The content included Reformation history, Law and Gospel, the Theology of the Cross, the Hidden God and the Book of Concord. Dr Stephen Haar (ALC) taught on Justification by Faith and Law and Gospel while Dr Stephen Pietsch covered Lutheran homiletics. Dr Chang's approach was not only an in depth study of the content but also having groups discuss related pastoral issues. This allowed the participants to apply Lutheran theology and teaching to realistic situations. There were many benefits and learnings for the participants as a result. Together with the lecturer the group planned future workshops for 2020 and 2021.

"Besides a more in depth understanding of Lutheran Distinctive, this workshop gave me a better understanding of LCA Chinese ministry and the difficulties encountered in its development such as the high mobility among members and tension resulting from cultural difference between East and West." (Pastor CK Lee-Malaysia)



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia established Bethany Home more than 50 years ago to care for those living with disability and to reach out with the saving message of the gospel. In a culture that looks down on those who suffer, this is a place of refuge and hope inspired by the forgiveness and new life offered in Jesus' name.

*Pray for the people who attend Bethany Home. Pray they may live in the knowledge of being loved by God and the people who support and encourage them.*

15

## Bethany Home

Like all good partnerships, our partnership with Bethany Home is one of blessings flowing in both directions as you will hear in the following story of a recent visit by students from Immanuel College, Novar Gardens, South Australia. After six months of preparation, fundraising and getting to know each other, we flew out of Adelaide to Kuala Lumpur then to Bethany Home. We worked in classes including academic classes, special needs, work skill, therapy and physio. We visited the Lighthouse Training Centre where older students put handles together for pot lids, create bookmarks or organise and sell second-hand clothes. They can earn an income from this in a workplace environment. Activities were varied and included helping the students, gardening, cleaning, sports activities, hydrotherapy, arts and craft, painting murals and devotions with staff.

Our Immanuel students immersed themselves in the culture, formed bonds and supported each other. They demonstrated love, care and a genuine want to support and assist the Bethany students whenever possible. They formed some great connections with the students and staff in a short time.

Working at Bethany gives you a new perspective on life and an appreciation of the difficulties that people with disabilities face. Despite their challenges, the Bethany students turn up to school every day with a smile on their face, willing to do their best without complaint. We can learn a lot from their attitude to life.

– Dwayne Todd, Immanuel College Year 9 Coordinator



## Malaysian youth

16

*Pray for the spiritual development of this youth group. Pray for a blessing on those who lead. Pray that we may seek ways to communicate our faith with others outside our church walls.*

For a number of years now, LCA International Mission has sponsored the youth ministry of the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM BM). Through this support, the young Christian leaders in East Malaysia plan ministry camps and seminars to train their youth to be Jesus in their communities.

Christian camping programs in Malaysia see high numbers of young people attend and provide wonderful opportunities for hearts to be warmed by the gospel and lives given purpose for being God's children. The theme chosen for the next two years is 'Go and make disciples', encouraging young adults in BCCM BM to be active, creative and productive in doing their service and so young adults in the church can communicate with the world, outside the walls of the church.

As well as seminars, a teenagers camp has been added to the other major youth camp held annually. The youth leaders ask us to keep them in our prayers, particularly for the spiritual preparation and development of the mission and for spiritual wisdom.

They asked us to pray for the spiritual development, strength and growth of the partner churches – including us! May their wisdom give us hope and courage, and ears and hearts open to hearing God calling us to serve Jesus.

I pray that the hope and grace we have found in Jesus will be shared with our next generation. May we have the grace to learn from our brothers and sisters.

# Myanmar

More than 135 ethnic groups in a population of 56 million. Most practise Buddhism and speak Burmese. International Mission partner with four member churches of the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

*global partners · local church*

Dianne and I have been involved with Myanmar mission work since 2007 having travelled there quite a number of times now.

17

In early September, we arrived in Myanmar and spent one month volunteering there. We literally hit the ground running. On the night we arrived, I went to bed and prayed to God as I was overwhelmed spiritually and came under attack. I was fearful, felt like a 'pretender' and not up to doing the training. God came to me and his Holy Spirit filled me with a peace and warmth and I went to sleep knowing that God was with us and would bless what we were doing.

The students loved worshipping through music and learning English through music and explanation. I started learning Burmese with the help of some of the locals, which gave the students a laugh. The students were very forgiving and understanding. Training generally went from 10.00am to 3.00 pm with lunch break of an hour 12-00 - 1.00 p.m.

Throughout the five weeks we were in Myanmar we continued training at the Myanmar Lutheran Seminary. Pastor James San Aung, Principal of Myanmar Lutheran Seminary and Mission Director of Myanmar Lutheran Church (MLC), requested that we do some theological training on Evangelism and Discipleship. So at night I would be preparing material using books I had taken and also borrowed from the church library.

We mixed up the training by singing songs, learning English and doing theological studies throughout the day. On a number of occasions God prompted me to stop training and just pray for a given situation, whether it be the ongoing civil war in Paletwa, Chin State or individual students. I learnt so much while teaching at the Myanmar Lutheran Seminary.

The students would be given the opportunity to share what they learned during the day through an interpreter and shared wonderful faith stories and testimonies of their faith.

*Pray for faith, love and hope wherever God's word is taught. Pray for pastor James and the members of the Myanmar Lutheran Church*



**Dianne & Ian Kluge**

After the small table is set and the evening meal is placed on the table, Pastors Mai Ki and Si join with their 5 children to give thanks for their meal. As is customary for the people of the Mara Evangelical Church in Myanmar, a handful of rice is placed into a container next to the dining table and is set aside for Jesus after each evening meal is served.

Once a month the rice is collected and given to the elders. The rice forms a rice bank – a gift to God which is collected and sold. Although the Mara church is not made up of wealthy people, they have found the “handful of rice stewardship program” a way that everyone in the church can contribute to the mission work.

Mai Ki is the first female pastor of the Mara Evangelical Church (MEC) in Myanmar and while Mai Ki knew her husband, Rev Si Khaw, before going to university, they got to know each other well after walking 17 days each way to the university during semester breaks. Mai was ordained in 2006 after studying at the Gurukul Lutheran Seminary.

Mai's mum is president of the women in her local church and would pray that however she would serve God, she would. Because of her limited education, it wasn't possible to become an evangelist or pastor so she prayed that her daughter would serve God.

Mai now has a role that sees her sharpening her churches ability to impact its community in education, community sustainability, empowering women and caring for those with disability. Many women in the Mara church are involved in serving and Mai has found that once the women are convinced they have something to offer, they gift the church with patience and perseverance.

A mother's prayer, a handful of rice, willing hearts and a loving God. All things are possible.

*Pray for opportunities for the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar to become financially independent so they can continue to reach out with the love of Jesus. May we share God's love with our communities.*

18

Mai Ki



*Pray for clarity in the lecturers teaching. Thank God for His Word and the impact it has on lives. Pray that more people will serve in roles of teaching across Asia.*

## A lecturer in Asia

Courses on Lutheran Distinctions organised and sponsored by the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) in Myanmar are having a profound impact on participants. One woman says: 'In general, we have many Bible studies but we hardly hear about Lutheran teaching. The Lutheran perspective is so enriching for us because often we ask, "Why do we do it this way?", and you explained us why.'

Pastors and lay leaders from the four Lutheran church bodies that form the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar are invited to participate in the courses.

About 25 years ago, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM), started to support the newly established Myanmar Lutheran Church. The urgent need for theological training of pastors and lay leaders arose and Mission Director of LCM Rev Dr Philip Tan organised courses. Then as theological consultant to LCM, I became involved in teaching about Lutheran distinctions.

What does the Lutheran church share with other Christian denominations? What are the reasons for being different in specific doctrines and practices? These questions are important in a country where many religions and Christian denominations compete for people's hearts and commitment.

Along the way, other Lutheran church bodies were invited and joined in this program. Together with partner churches from Europe, Asia and America, the LCA/NZ supports this program through the MMF. A practical side effect of the combined seminars is that pastors and lay leaders get to know each other beyond the boundaries of their own church bodies. Trust is built and steps towards closer cooperation are taken. This is just one example of how these seminars significantly impact Lutheran Christians in Myanmar.





# Grow young leaders

20

*Pray for our young people.*

*That we may encourage them by sharing our love for Jesus and that they may be bold in the Spirit to live lives of faith and service. Pray for your family.*

Imagine having the opportunity to see your church's ministry and mission in an Asian culture first-hand. Young Australian and Asian Lutherans get to do just that. Over the year, they learn about our church's ministries, develop leadership skills, see mission in Asia and have a mentor encourage them.

The Grow Leadership program identifies future young leaders in the LCA and in our Asian neighbouring churches. The participants develop friendships across cultures and are encouraged in deepening their love for Jesus as they see his Spirit at work. The participants reflected on their time in Myanmar.

Emma observed 'We focus so much on what other people think of us – we forget to act in ways that God wants us to act. I see over here how desperate people are to teach others about God and the lengths they go to share God's love and message. Hudson observed, 'God's spirit is literally all over the world and it unites us.' Matt found a reality in being human 'I learnt a great deal about God's patience for His people when we stuff up'.

To be immersed in another culture opens our eyes in many ways. The young people were surprised at the enthusiasm they witnessed during worship. They observed a Christian culture willing to give so much even though they have so little. Time was taken to debrief and discuss the new experiences of each participant.

'I talked to God and he answered me. He made me remain calm.' Jacob  
'When I was feeling overwhelmed I could feel God give comfort and know that he was listening, even when I wasn't speaking. This gave me a sense of peace.' Wendy

Seeing how God works in the lives of our brothers and sisters in another culture has given these young people a greater appreciation of how God works.

He is faithful in the beginning of my journey to the end.' Bielehmo

*Pray for partnerships that teach us what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for the church in Myanmar that they may serve the communities where God has placed them.*

21

A partner is a pair of people engaged in the same activity. 'Partnership' is, therefore, the perfect descriptor for what the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar and Ipswich Lutheran Church have established, as together we are engaging in the same activity: knowing Christ and making Christ known.

Our partnership is entering its third year and we continue to develop, as both churches serve, pray for, give to, share with, and encourage each other.

During the past year a group of six members from the Ipswich Lutheran Church travelled to Myanmar. One of the activities undertaken during this trip was a visit to a small village, a few hours drive from Yangon. The village visit included sharing and teaching songs in English; members from Ipswich sharing their gospel story; Holy Communion served to the sick and elderly; praying for people in their homes and the sharing of books and pencils for the children's school year ahead.

The highlight of our visit was when one of the young participants shared a sincere 'thank you' to both churches for coming into the village to share the Gospel message of Christ with them.

When we visit Myanmar each year, we feel truly blessed to be in partnership, as we grow together in our knowledge of Christ and go into our own communities to make Christ known.

## Congregation Partnerships





*Pray for the women in Myanmar. Ask for them to be bringers of God's love to their church and their communities. Pray that sisters across Asia find ways to support and encourage each other.*

22

## Pauline Simonsen

Visiting Myanmar for the first time 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, hosted by the Federation of the Lutheran Churches in Myanmar and co-sponsored by LCA International Mission.

What could I share with people who had suffered repression for so long? My few days in Yangon with 38 women from four different Lutheran churches were wonderfully blessed. The locals were gentle, courteous and gracious.

The theme 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. A deeper context was prayer for unity among people with very different backgrounds.

As we made crafts, shared God's word, prayed, sang and laughed together, the Spirit revealed to us all how we are one in our Lord Jesus Christ. We learned again that we are the family of God, sisters in the body of Christ.

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 group. We prayed for our sister.

God used all this to knit us closer together as his family, drawing us all together in his rich, glorious family. A communion of saints indeed!

# Papua New Guinea

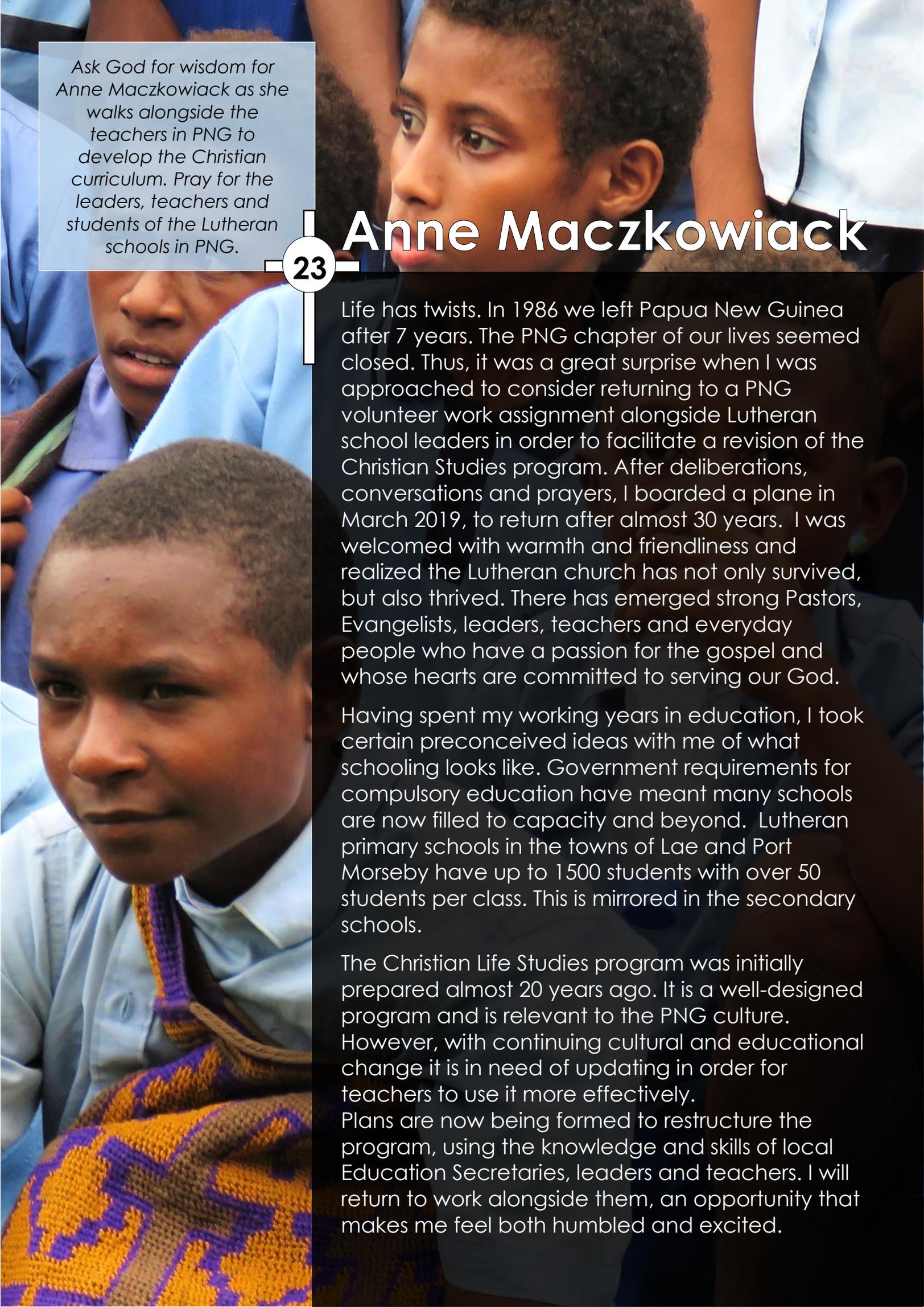
Over 200 cultures and 800 languages. 1.5 million people belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). More than 800 Australian Lutherans have served together with the Lutheran Church in PNG over 130 years.



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

*global partners · local church*



Ask God for wisdom for Anne Maczkowiack as she walks alongside the teachers in PNG to develop the Christian curriculum. Pray for the leaders, teachers and students of the Lutheran schools in PNG.

23

## Anne Maczkowiack

Life has twists. In 1986 we left Papua New Guinea after 7 years. The PNG chapter of our lives seemed closed. Thus, it was a great surprise when I was approached to consider returning to a PNG volunteer work assignment alongside Lutheran school leaders in order to facilitate a revision of the Christian Studies program. After deliberations, conversations and prayers, I boarded a plane in March 2019, to return after almost 30 years. I was welcomed with warmth and friendliness and realized the Lutheran church has not only survived, but also thrived. There has emerged strong Pastors, Evangelists, leaders, teachers and everyday people who have a passion for the gospel and whose hearts are committed to serving our God.

Having spent my working years in education, I took certain preconceived ideas with me of what schooling looks like. Government requirements for compulsory education have meant many schools are now filled to capacity and beyond. Lutheran primary schools in the towns of Lae and Port Moresby have up to 1500 students with over 50 students per class. This is mirrored in the secondary schools.

The Christian Life Studies program was initially prepared almost 20 years ago. It is a well-designed program and is relevant to the PNG culture. However, with continuing cultural and educational change it is in need of updating in order for teachers to use it more effectively.

Plans are now being formed to restructure the program, using the knowledge and skills of local Education Secretaries, leaders and teachers. I will return to work alongside them, an opportunity that makes me feel both humbled and excited.

# Agnes

Agnes lives in the mountainous area of the Chimbu province in PNG, in the shadows of imposing Mount Wilhelm. Here it's possible for farmers to fall off their gardens.

Since 2006 Agnes has been the Lutheran Women's Coordinator of the Chimbu District. The role sees her train women in leadership, run training sessions in sewing, cooking and music. She conducts sessions on overcoming violence against women, adult literacy and flower arranging. A guest house she established provides extra income for local unpaid pastors. She evangelises remote communities and coordinates Conventions.

Organised, dedicated, in love with Jesus and respected by the males in a male-dominated culture, Agnes is a doer. She sees God's hand in her life and His will is clear – build and encourage women leaders. 'Together', says Agnes 'we can move the gospel to everybody near and far.'

Agnes recently attended a Women's Conference in Geneva, while helping to bring the gospel to a remote Papua New Guinean community. In this community, if a woman is pregnant, an older male will kill a pig and mark the baby. If it is a girl, the male owns the child. At any time he can say he wants the girl. By this stage he is already old and the young woman finds herself with several children, a dead husband and living in a culture which ensures she never marries again. This leaves the women poor and the young men without wives.

As I see her lead the Women's Convention, I sit in awe. All of the community attend the conference. It is a social gathering in their village and these are social people.

I see poverty and hardships, but I also see incredible generosity, strength in community and a spirit-filled passion to proclaim Jesus.

In a village nestled in the remote mountains of the Chimbu, I realise that God, through Agnes, has much to teach us about trust, faith and his love.



24

*Pray for Agnes and for God's Spirit to continue to inspire her and work through her. Pray for ways we may partner with Agnes and learn from her love for Jesus. Ask God for ways for you to impact your community.*

*Pray for James and the schools on Siassi Island. Pray for the partnership between Concordia College and the Siassi Island schools. Ask God for our young people to learn of His love.*

25

## James Zebbeddy

James Zebbeddy is a young man who teaches students at Amialu Primary School on Siassi Island. James' surname is his father's first name. Married to Catherine and a dad to 2 children, James grew up in a Lutheran family. His faith continued to grow when, in year 10, he was involved in a Christian study program. He repented and led prayer teams and shared his faith with friends. He encouraged people who were going through problems and especially enjoyed being with children. He realised that children provided many blessings to a community. It was a logical step for James to become a teacher – a teacher passionate about sharing his love for Jesus.

I met James in Lae after he had taken a 12 hour journey on an unreliable boat to the mainland of Papua New Guinea, to take part in the third education training session between the 32 Lutheran schools on Siassi island and Concordia College, St John's campus, Unley, SA.

James' first involvement in the partnership was in 2013 after being invited to take part in presentations as part of Concordia's visit to Siassi Island. James saw immediately the benefits to the sessions he attended and his classroom teaching skills began to include more use of phonics and a wider spectrum of writing genres. His classroom also developed a stronger focus on English- a subject he has fallen in love with. For James, English opens access to knowledge through books and on websites.

Developing a spiritual strength is a must for his school on Siassi Island and James knows that the partnership is not only helping with educational strategies and practices but is based on building each other up as brothers and sisters in Christ.

James would like to continue his studies at a university level at the University of Goroka and study Christian Philosophy and Education. "Jesus is God's grace that makes me feel free as a Christian teacher," he says. "Through the partnership, we take discussions back to our communities and inform them of the importance of walking together in partnership."



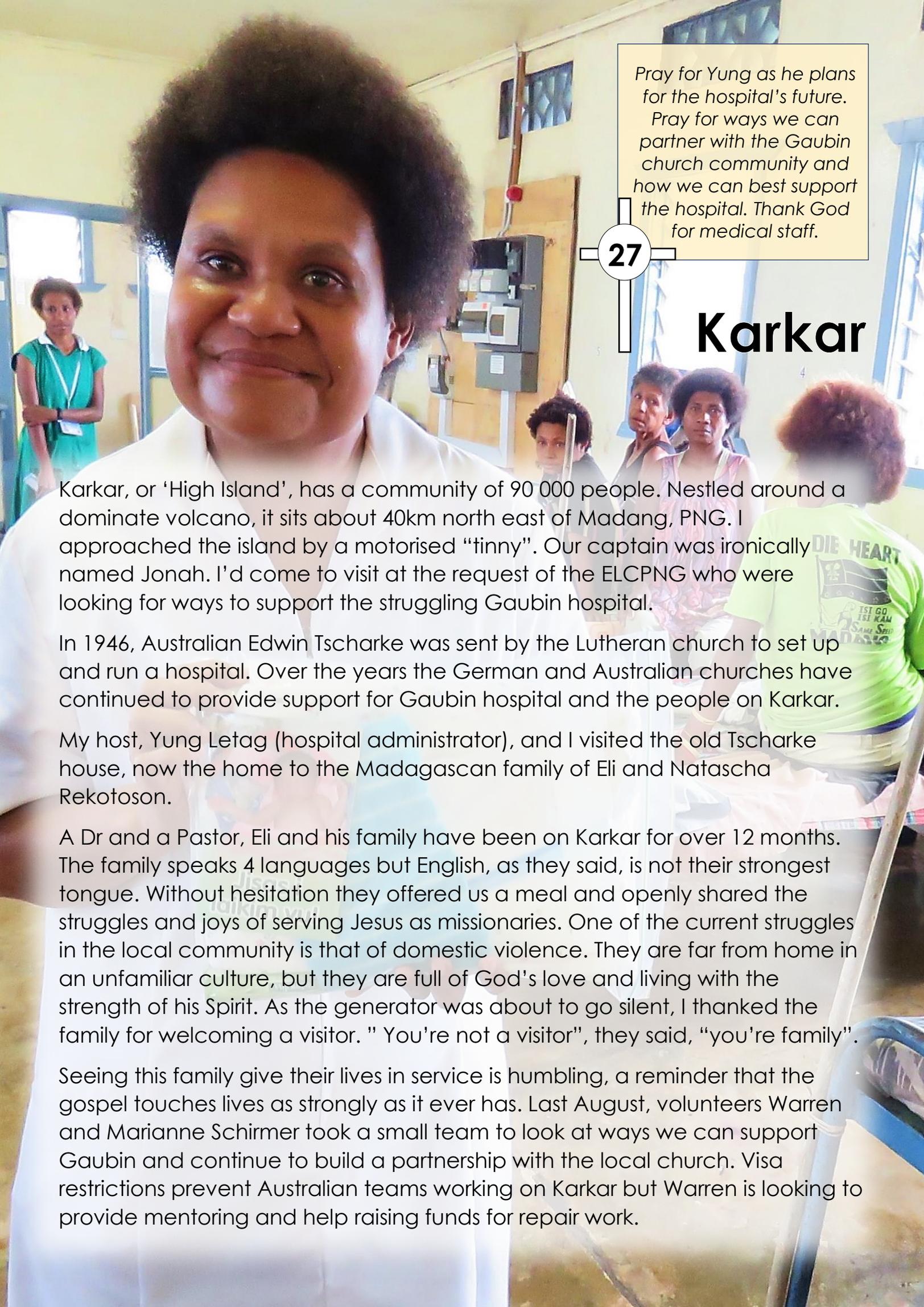
26

*Pray for Anke, Patrick and their family and for Hanna as they serve God and the people of PNG through Bible translation and medical work at Ukarumpa.*

## Anke, Patrick & Hanna

Anke and Patrick Sprau are originally from Germany, but moved to Australia ten years ago and now call it home. Both their children were born in Mildura, Victoria, where they lived as a family for three years. Patrick is a General Practitioner and most recently has been working in Indigenous healthcare in Whyalla on a fly-in fly-out basis. Anke is a physiotherapist and has been working close to home, first in a private practice and recently in a nursing home.

Anke and Patrick became members of Wycliffe Bible Translators in 2018 and have signed up for service in Papua New Guinea for two years, however, they are open to extending their service period, if all goes well. They will be based in Ukarumpa, with Hanna Schulz, in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea from January 2020. Ukarumpa is a centre of operations, where many Bible translators come to check their work, liaise with others for mutual support, participate in professional development, receive medical care or take a break from living in remote areas. For Bible translators to be able to do their work, other professionals and support workers are needed, such as teachers for missionary kids, IT personnel, pilots, and medical personnel like Anke and Patrick. Ukarumpa has a medical clinic where they will work in their respective professions, treating expatriates as well as local people from the surrounding villages. Furthermore, they will participate in outreach clinics and health patrols to villages that otherwise would not receive medical care.



*Pray for Yung as he plans for the hospital's future. Pray for ways we can partner with the Gaubin church community and how we can best support the hospital. Thank God for medical staff.*

27

## Karkar

Karkar, or 'High Island', has a community of 90 000 people. Nestled around a dominate volcano, it sits about 40km north east of Madang, PNG. I approached the island by a motorised "tinny". Our captain was ironically named Jonah. I'd come to visit at the request of the ELCPNG who were looking for ways to support the struggling Gaubin hospital.

In 1946, Australian Edwin Tscharke was sent by the Lutheran church to set up and run a hospital. Over the years the German and Australian churches have continued to provide support for Gaubin hospital and the people on Karkar.

My host, Yung Letag (hospital administrator), and I visited the old Tscharke house, now the home to the Madagascan family of Eli and Natascha Rekotoson.

A Dr and a Pastor, Eli and his family have been on Karkar for over 12 months. The family speaks 4 languages but English, as they said, is not their strongest tongue. Without hesitation they offered us a meal and openly shared the struggles and joys of serving Jesus as missionaries. One of the current struggles in the local community is that of domestic violence. They are far from home in an unfamiliar culture, but they are full of God's love and living with the strength of his Spirit. As the generator was about to go silent, I thanked the family for welcoming a visitor. "You're not a visitor", they said, "you're family".

Seeing this family give their lives in service is humbling, a reminder that the gospel touches lives as strongly as it ever has. Last August, volunteers Warren and Marianne Schirmer took a small team to look at ways we can support Gaubin and continue to build a partnership with the local church. Visa restrictions prevent Australian teams working on Karkar but Warren is looking to provide mentoring and help raising funds for repair work.



# Coral Gallasch

28

*Pray for the Heldsbach community. Pray that their desire to teach their children Jesus love may be our desire for our communities. Reflect on the strength of a mothers love for her*

The Heldsbach Project began in 2008 when Tony Gallasch, a previous mission worker in PNG returned to Heldsbach after 40 years, this time bringing his wife Coral along for the short term visit.

Coral was soon asked by a German missionary Sabine if, as a early childhood teacher, she would help start a much needed kindergarten in the area.

“I can’t do that!” said Coral. “Why not?” Replied Sabine. The seed was planted and the Spirit helped it flourish.

With ongoing funding raised by their St Paul’s Hahndorf congregation, Coral returned with a team to build and conduct a teacher training workshop. The partnership has flourished and 10 years later, with great sustained enthusiasm from the women of Heldsbach, there are now 24 early childhood centres in the Heldsbach region, all a result of Corals initial workshop in 2009 and follow up session in 2011. Basic starter packs of educational material has been funded over the years by St Paul’s members. They send the funds and when the teachers visit the church office in Lae they buy educational supplies. Early childhood education was never a priority in this area but one of the centers began with an enrolment of 40 children.

The teachers share their love of Jesus through these centers and the partnership with St Paul’s continues. Coral planned to start just one kindergarten but God has sown a community.

# Thailand

Around 95% of the 69 million people in Thailand are Buddhist and this belief system plays a huge role in day-to-day life.

LCA International Mission partners with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) and a key part of this is supporting the local Lua evangelists in the Nan province.



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

global partners · local church



# Khun Pim



29

*Pray for Khun Pim as she shares the love of Jesus.*

*Pray also for Toua, Gem, their children and the villagers of Ban Huay Pong. Ask God to show you his work in your life, the lives of your family and your community.*

Khun Pim is one of the evangelists in the Lau district in Thailand. You sponsor her through the Lutheran Church of Australia, International Mission.

Khun Pim serves the Ban Huay Pong community, a village of 300 people, 70 of which now believe in Jesus.

A year ago, Khun Pim's village was in crisis. Nine people had died in the village and the older people were starting to demand that the church must move to another village. The deaths, they said, were being caused by the church.....

Power struggles are not uncommon in these Thai villages. Toua, the spirit doctor of the village taught the people that there are many spirits in the forests around the village and in the river nearby. As people believed he was powerful, they would ask him to bless their crops before they planted them or bless the water before they fished. They wanted to be sure that the spirits were stable in these places before they worked the land or fished the waters. Toua himself had been feeling unwell on and off for many years.

Gem, has been married to Toua for 27 years and, unbeknown to Toua she had become a christian and would worship in another village! Whenever she worshipped she noticed that her husband would be unwell when she returned home. Finally, after ten years, she told her husband that she was a Christian and did not like others coming to her husband drunk in their home. She wanted others to have the peace of Jesus in their hearts. Toua's bouts of illness lead him to attend church for prayer. Five years ago he was baptised and now attends weekly.

Life is a journey for all of us who walk as God's children. Gem and Toua have two children; their youngest follows Jesus but their eldest son wants to become a lead monk in the village. He believes that when his father was a doctor spirit the community respected him, not so now. Because of this power struggle, the monks built a temple near the Lutheran Church in the village..As a result of nine villagers dying in a short period of time a meeting was held to ease the tensions. The evangelist Khun Pim, her pastor Ajan Amnuay and the villagers discovered the cause of deaths in the village was the excessive alcohol.

Ouan was the last remaining doctor spirit in the village of Ban Huay Tong, in Thailand's Nan Province.

Spirits exist in many forms in Nan and the common element they share is the possibility that they will become evil if they are not properly appeased. Therefore the placating of offending spirits plays an important role in the life of the local Lua people, as the spirits are believed to cause loss of crops, illness and even death.

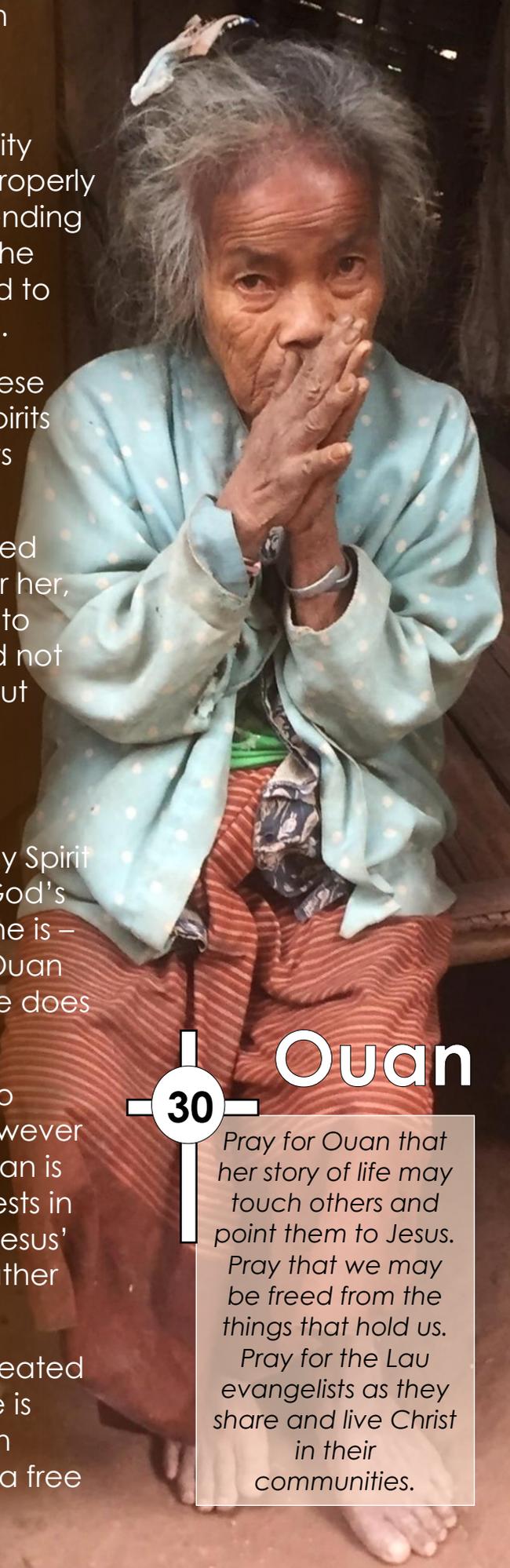
Those who have the power to appease these spirits are the doctor spirits. These doctor spirits are lavished with food and other payments for their important role.

Ouan's family lives in Laos, where she moved as a refugee. Without her family to care for her, she relied on her position as a doctor spirit to ensure she had a prosperous life. Ouan did not think she had a good life. She worried about everything. She felt enslaved. Her soul was restless.

Two years ago Lun Min, one of the Lua evangelists, visited Ban Huay Tong. The Holy Spirit spoke to Ouan through Lun Min, pouring God's love into her heart, reassuring her whose she is – that she belongs to her Heavenly Father. Ouan realised that because God is in control, she does not have to be now Jesus is in her life.

Since Ouan has become a believer, she no longer has a status of power or wealth, however her strength now comes from the Lord. Ouan is now a person of hope, knowing that she rests in God's heart and her destiny is to share in Jesus' eternal glory and delight in the love the Father has for her.

Ouan has the reassurance that she was created for God to love her and that, in his love, he is rescuing her for himself. She knows this is an abundance that cannot be bought but is a free gift and is everlasting.



## 30 Ouan

*Pray for Ouan that her story of life may touch others and point them to Jesus.*

*Pray that we may be freed from the things that hold us.*

*Pray for the Lau evangelists as they share and live Christ in their communities.*

I was part of a group of five people from three Adelaide Hills Lutheran churches which recently visited the Nan district in northern Thailand.

Our mission was to construct a hothouse on the church farm with evangelists from surrounding villages. The sale of the produce from the hothouse will provide income to support the training of evangelists and the purchase of much-needed worship materials. It also allows the evangelists to invite non-Christian villagers to train in new agricultural methods at the farm while witnessing to them.

Pastor Michael Dutschke led training in prayer ministry to help local evangelists with their gospel mission and pastoral care.

We spent eight days of building, laughing, eating and time with the local evangelists. What hit home was how the evangelists live out their faith.

One day we visited an outlying Christian village with evangelist Min. We could not understand them but there was plenty of laughter. Later he explained that this village was run by a powerful witchdoctor and he had received death threats for trying to preach the word of God there. With God's help, he has been slowly bringing people in that village to know Christ.

If you have ever thought about going overseas for this type of experience, I implore you to take a leap of faith and speak to the LCA International Mission team – it is a life-changing experience for those who go.

## Chris Sumner

31

*Pray for the Thai evangelists. Pray for LCA congregations who are willing to partner with our Asian church partners.*



Pray for the work of Home of Grace. Pray for peace in the hearts of the women who come to the home, that many may see Jesus through their love.

32

# Home of Grace

It reads like a classic love story.

It's a story that is repeated in countries all around the world, in wealthy communities and poor communities, in families that don't know Jesus and those in love with Jesus.



Mim is 24 years old and comes from the beautiful countryside in Thailand. An only child in her family, her father is a military officer and her mother a nurse. Both know the importance of a good education and the opportunities it offers. New opportunities are possible but for country people that means applying yourself and using education to open doors.

Mim was sent to study at a famous university in Bangkok to offer Mim a future and her parents joy. She met a senior boy to help her with her study. They fell in love but broke up in less than a year. Soon after, Mim realised she was pregnant. Looking for support, Mim contacted the father-to-be but he would not take responsibility. With options decreasing, Mim decided to take care of the baby alone..

Mim continued to study, perhaps trying to ignore reality, perhaps losing hope as guilt and fear grew with the growing child inside her. When 8 months pregnant, she took a break in her studies, considered her dwindling options and finally told her mum. Her mum became very angry as her hopes and dreams for her only child were fading. In this culture of shame and guilt and with her hopes now dashed, Mim's mum found a place for Mim to stay during her last month of the pregnancy. Mim and her mum found Home of Grace.

With support and care from the staff in Home of Grace, Mim found a way forward for herself and her unborn child. Mim decided to leave her baby in foster care and continue her education. After she graduates and gets a job, her plan is to take care of her child by herself.

One day she hopes her mum will forgive her and take care of the baby until she is finished her studies.

Home of Grace offers support, love and hope where mostly those things have disappeared.



Pray for Rova and Tovo as they minister to the people of northern Thailand. Pray that they may be filled with compassion and hearts flowing with God's love. Pray for ways you might serve your community.

33

**Dr Rova**

Dr Rova, a Malagasy Lutheran Church missionary in the Nan province of Thailand, coordinates the Mother and Child Healthcare program in the Lua communities.

Many of the locals are immigrants and refugees from Laos and Myanmar and none of the local villages have hospitals or clinics. People face disease and sickness. Together with her husband Rev Tovo, Dr Rova walks beside the Lua Lutheran evangelists you sponsor and support through International Mission. Proclaiming Jesus and servicing the Nan community go hand in hand.

Thai law doesn't allow Dr Rova to work as a foreign doctor so she works as a volunteer. She regularly visits villages to check on children's health and to determine the essential support they need. 'we meet children with sicknesses; we consult and provide medicines.

'Several of them need food support, due to their parents' inability to afford food of any sort, so we have taken the decision to provide them with milk. We went from village to village to see the reality of these children and young girls' lives – they live with sick single mothers who can't work, or with grandparents who are old. Children's weights and health are monitored. Advice and support is given for flu treatment, dermatological disease, diet and the management of sickness. Adults with chronic health issues are checked.' There are also some people who don't have an ID card and they don't want to go to the hospital for many reasons, so we help them in what we can do. Some people don't want to go to hospital because of the discrimination that they will endure.

The work brings health to the villages and embeds these missionaries into their community because of their care and love. Faith, a future and freedom through the gospel, are alive in the Nan community.

# Singapore

# ..& Other

Mandarin, English and Malay are the main languages of the 6 million inhabitants of Singapore. The Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) is a mission focussed church with established mission areas in China, Mongolia, Thailand and Cambodia.



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**  
*global partners · local church*

Thank God for the production of this resource and for its translation into different languages 30 years later.

# Growing as God's people

The LCA publication *Growing as God's People* is now being used to encourage and foster the faith of Lisu believers in China, Myanmar and Thailand. There are about 730,000 Lisu living in Yunnan and Sichuan Province of China, 600,000 in Northern Myanmar and 55,000 in Northern Thailand.

*Growing as God's People*, which is based on Luther's *Small Catechism*, has previously been translated into Chinese, Malaysian and Indonesian, and now is in the process of being translated into Burmese.

The resource was originally written by Pastor David Strelan and the late Pastor Noel Weiss, who through the church's budget were employed as directors of the Board for Congregational Life. Published in 1981 by LCA's Lutheran Publishing House, *Growing as God's People* was subsequently re-edited by Pastor Strelan and republished in English in 2017. While this version retained the content of the original, it was redesigned with the aim of introducing the Christian faith to a new generation. The redesign and artwork were done in Singapore by LCS, with LCA funds.

Glenice Hartwich, former LCA Assistant to the Bishop – International Mission, said, 'Members of our church made the production of the original work possible through their offerings Sunday after Sunday all those years ago. In the same way they have also helped to make possible some of the new translations. We thank God for the amazing work of Pastor Strelan and Pastor Noel Weiss in writing this book. Please pray that God will continue to use this resource to help many in other countries to grow as God's people.'



As Chak Mun darts in and out of the traffic on his scooter in Phnom Penh, a westerner might be tempted to think he is at home in Cambodia.

Chak Mun was born the first son of a Chinese-Singaporean family who worshipped ancestors and lived under the burden of trying to please their departed loved ones. His parents however, encouraged their children to be free thinkers. When Chak Mun joined Boys' Brigade in primary school and learnt the Christian faith his parents were content to support his new found faith with the condition that at least one of their children continued to take care of the ancestors.

Chak Mun was baptised in 1997 but his extended family became angry he wouldn't lead the family in the traditions and beliefs of the past. Chak Mun sought to live as a faithful child of God, serving as a Boys' Brigade leader.

During his mother's battle with cancer in 2005, church elders visited and shared the gospel. To his delight, during these visits, his mother became a Christian.

After a decade of travelling to Cambodia to serve as needed, Chak Mun was appointed as field co-ordinator for the Lutheran Church. He supports church leaders, co-ordinates logistics and projects, oversees finances, and connects people to address needs. 'I'm a Singapore Christian,' he says, 'so I think like a Singapore Christian. The Cambodian church will eventually need to work out how to take hold of its future.'

'Life in a young church is difficult, especially when it comes to serving those who carry the trauma of the war. Chak Mun will serve the LCC until 2022 when he prays he will no longer be needed by his Cambodian brothers and sisters.



35

## Chak Mun

*Pray for the young Cambodian Church leaders as they bring the gospel to their communities. Pray for Chak Mun as he serves the Cambodian church with his gifts.*





Thank God for the stamp collectors, cleaners and sorters who make it possible for International Mission to support mission projects across Asia and PNG.

36

## Stamps for Missions

When I told Marj and Clarrie Schutz that I wanted to write a brief account of their involvement in Stamps for Mission, Marj's immediate reply was 'it's time consuming'.

Marj has been involved in cleaning/sorting and bundling stamps since I spoke at a women's fellowship meeting about Stamps for Mission.

So, for more than a decade Marj has regarded this as a hobby that she really enjoys. She says it is educational and far better than watching television.

Husband Clarrie (who was 94 years old in November) started a little later, but now sorts stamps into different values to make the later bundling easier.

Every few weeks I have a shoebox full of bundled stamps delivered to my home.

Marj feels it is a real joy to be involved with Stamps for Mission and when she sees the benefit there is to International Mission, and what a difference it makes to the recipients, she is glad to be able to assist in this project.

Clarrie says it keeps him profitably occupied as his reduced ability limits his involvement in many other activities - Peter Nitschke (Coordinator)



# Noel Due

37

*Pray for the Singapore church that they may continue to proclaim Jesus in their community. Pray for Noel as he works with local mission to encourage our church to share the love of Jesus in our communities.*

In the last week of October 2019 I went to Singapore at the invitation of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS). I led a full day teaching seminar for their pastors and church workers on the Person and work of the Spirit in mission and preached at a celebration event for Reformation Sunday. The seminar was based on material in a new book by myself and Steen Olsen, [Spirit Filled: Normal Christian Living](#). The Spirit is doing a great work in the LCS. I was both blessed and humbled to be amongst them. We have a lot to learn from them, and I came away deeply encouraged. While the Singaporean situation is unique we shouldn't let that detract from the things we might learn.

The LCS has been creative and adaptive in problem solving, not least around infrastructure and interdenominational work this enables. They have embedded local mission in the heart of their work, and this spills over to evangelistic mission work in other parts of South East Asia. The leadership and focus of Bishop Terry and Martin Yee in this area is crucial, and, significantly both of these men are adult converts to the faith. Reaping the harvest is in their DNA. With apartment living ever on the increase in our cities, the LCS can teach us how to live in a different way. Neighbourhoods look different in multi-storey high rise apartment buildings. How the church engages is different. What the church must be skilled to face is different. But the harvest is still plentiful. We will need to learn from those who have spent decades of gospel work in such places.

The nature of ministry and evangelism in the LCS is fundamentally inter-cultural. Where they have been since their inception, we are soon to follow. Nearly all of our local mission will need to be cross cultural. And in a new way. No longer a 'landlord/tenant' relationship between the core Anglo group and others who use our premises; but a combined and mutual learning community in leadership, ministry, mission and fellowship. The visit was a mutual experience of being subject to one another in the Spirit, sharing together in one Word.

Sitting on our balcony we hum the tune to 'Give me a home among the gum trees' with irony, as we now live in a concrete apartment block with a balcony that overlooks another elegant concrete wall. But our addition of fake grass is bringing Aussie flavour to our surroundings!

Apartment living is by no means the only adjustment we have made after packing up life in Australia and moving to West Asia. Learning a new language has been the hardest assignment, along with living life with no family here to support us. **But we see God is at work in this country.** He has provided us with friends who laugh with us as we practice language.

We are also part of a 30-plus member Interserve team from all corners of the globe, whose members have decades of experience. In partnership with the LCA, Interserve has sent us here as ordinary Christians to put faith into action, in a part of the world where tens of millions haven't heard about Jesus.

We are surrounded by countless opportunities to put faith into action. In this country there are several million refugees who have made perilous border crossings and their situation is constantly on our minds.

The country is trying to provide schooling and health care, however, the sheer number and falling economy makes this an impossible task. But **God is at work in this city.** We have been supporting food distribution at the only Christian refugee centre in our city of millions. Food distribution is a very real need, however, often this fails to supply their biggest need - hope. The refugees have no option to go home. No other countries want them. Many have lost everything.

Last month we shared a meal with several refugee families. We heard their stories, and listened to their needs. 'We love Christians because they are the ones who care for our needs. They are different', one said. **God is at work among the refugees.** As one family left the lunch, with the wife wearing a head scarf, they walked past a table with Christian resources, printed in Arabic. They looked with interest, then left with several brochures and small books in hand.

Building relationships requires learning Arabic. Without it we would not get a long-term visa and therefore no long-term security, which is daunting given other Christians have been deported and had their visas rejected. It would mean living here without a 'normal' job. Having no job potentially creates barriers to developing relationships with locals, who already see us as strange foreigners. We continue to seek God about how we can bring hope to the people around us. Thank you to all the people who are supporting us, both financially and in prayer. Please pray!

Names and places have been intentionally omitted.

# “Audrey”

39

*Pray for Audrey as she settles into her new community. Pray God's Word continues to be translated and can be read by people across the world in their own languages.*

There are 7361 known living languages, including sign languages, in use in the world right now. However, readers of only 683 of these languages have the complete Bible available, with another 1534 languages having just a New Testament translation.

Audrey, not her real name for was first introduced to the work of Bible translation in 2004 and has since been on a number of short-term mission trips. During these trips she saw how important it was for people to have the Bible in their own language. If pastors struggle to understand the Bible in their country's national language, how can they disciple people from their own local language community?

She was also challenged by how many Bible translations we have available in English (literally 100s) and by how much still needs to be done to translate the Bible into languages which have no Scripture available.

In 2014, Audrey went to South Asia to help at a training workshop for local translators. The experience introduced her to the process of Bible translation and showed her how she could serve. Now, having equipped herself for the work, she is ready to return long-term. She is excited about serving the local church and working with national Bible translators as they translate God's word into their languages.

This is a wonderful opportunity for us in the LCA/NZ to join God's work in this area. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German so that “everyday people” could read and access God's Word so Bible translation is a key part of our heritage in the Lutheran church.

If I have learned anything in this last year, it is that the Reformation did not occur in the distant past, it only began. We have been called as the followers of God. We have been called to continue to spread the Gospel. We have been called to continue to reform the church. This year, I had the privilege of being one of the Australian representatives of the Lutheran World Federation Young Reformers.

In September, I travelled to the Global Young Reformers Network Conference and Asian Church Leaders Conference in Indonesia. I spent two weeks meeting a community of young people who are passionate about their churches and the ways that we can make a difference. We spent a week getting to know each other, forming cross-cultural relationships and discussing topics that are near and dear to our hearts. In particular, we addressed the topics of Education, Equity and Revival of Churches as they pertain to young people. We sought to identify the issues that occur in these areas within our local contexts as well as celebrating the successes that we have achieved since the synod a couple of years ago. It was then our turn to develop some recommendations to the church leaders in such a way that we can continue to develop in these areas and continue the reformation of the church.

The second week saw the youth of Asia attending the Asian Church Leaders Conference. We the youth, from countries including Thailand, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia, and Australia/New Zealand, were able to participate in the conference. We learned from our church leaders, expressed our views and had a chance to be involved in the future of the worldwide lutheran communion.

Though it may be said that we the youth are the future of the church, we also believe that we are part of the present. It was our final message, and a statement that struck us very strongly, that concluded our presentation. We the youth of Asia are here, and we are ready to make a change with you.

## Elsa Matthias

40

*Pray for Elsa and her passion for sharing her love for Jesus. Pray that God continues to raise up young leaders. Pray we encourage them.*

**LCA International Mission invites you to partner with us, as together we share in God's mission to the world.**

## PRAY

Continue to use this Lenten prayer guide throughout the year, or download the monthly prayer guide from our website.

<http://www.lcamission.org.au/join-gods-mission/pray/>

## GIVE

If you would like to use your Lenten offerings to assist in the extension of God's kingdom, following our Lord in his mission to make disciples of all nations, please contact the LCA International Mission office or visit our website to make donations to a project.

If you would like to join in God's mission through collecting and sending your used stamps for the Stamps for Mission project or preparing birthing kits for Papua New Guinea, please contact us.

## CONNECT

If you would like to learn more about how you can connect to the mission of God through a LCA International Mission congregational or school partnership, please contact Erin

## GO

If you would like to consider the opportunity to serve as a volunteer in mission, teaching English, teaching in seminaries and institutions of our partner churches, or serving in practical ways, please contact Nevin

**LCA International Mission office: 08 8267 7300**

**[lcaim@lca.org.au](mailto:lcaim@lca.org.au) [www.lca.org.au/international-mission](http://www.lca.org.au/international-mission)**

**Erin: [erin.kerber@lca.org.au](mailto:erin.kerber@lca.org.au)**

**Nevin: [nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au](mailto:nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au)**





**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION**

*global partners · local church*