

BORDER CROSSINGS



global partners · local church

>> Through long-established relationships, LCA International Mission seeks to equip, encourage, engage in and support the growth of holistic ministry carried out in relationship with our partners overseas and the individuals, congregations and districts of the Lutheran Church of Australia.



Pastor Matt Anker

Assistant to the Bishop
– International Mission
Lutheran Church
of Australia

WHAT A BLESSING TO BE WITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Like me, I'm sure most of you are sick of hearing about the impact of COVID on our lives. While we thank God for new and innovative ways in which we have been able to connect with people and continue relationships and ministry during these past two years, there's no question there's been a huge cost.

Mattias Desmet, lecturer of psychoanalytic psychotherapy at Ghent University in Belgium, is a leading voice in acknowledging the impact of digitalised relationships and notes that they are far from an adequate replacement for face-to-face interaction. His work, *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*, highlights the increased stress, misunderstanding and doubt online communication introduces – and that's with people of the same language and culture! Imagine how much more challenging it is working with people whose language and cultural background is very different from ours.

This was powerfully brought home when I was able to finally start visiting our overseas partner churches again this year. Two years of Zoom meetings, endless emails, WhatsApp messages and phone calls were put into perspective when a few hours of face-to-face conversation achieved what all these online forums could not.

This should not surprise us. Our Heavenly Father created us to be in relationship with him and each other. And he prioritises personal interaction so much that he didn't send his message of salvation in a text, but in his incarnate Son who is **the** message.

It is a wonderful joy to be back with brothers and sisters in our partner churches – seeing the full effect of the gospel communicated in words and body language. As it is shared in tears of joy, worshipping and praying together. Sitting with a newly baptised couple in Thailand and not only hearing how the gospel has released them from oppression but seeing it with my own eyes and sharing their joy cannot be communicated the same way online.

Despite the limitations of the past two years, God's mission has not slowed. I've now seen just how busy our partners have been as COVID has increased opportunities to share the hope we have in Christ and to love and care for those suffering.

In these pages, you will read stories of conversion and transformation, growing relationships between partners, ministries of word and service, and the very practical needs that are vital for our partners. And all this has taken place despite lockdowns, mandates, illness and poverty.

I thank God we can once again be present with our partners physically. But more than that, I thank God that his mission continues to change lives eternally despite all the challenges this world can throw at it.

TRANSFORMED
BY THE

◦ GOSPEL ◦

NOMADS NO MORE, PART 2

In the April 2019 edition of Border Crossings, we told the story of the mission of the Gereja Kristen Luther Indonesia (GKLI) church to the indigenous Sanak people in the jungles of North Sumatra. In April 2022 I was privileged to visit the Sanak village largely built by donations from LCA members. So how has the gospel transformed the lives of these dear saints? Kristian, the leader of this community, explains.

My name is Kristian Yanto. I am the Tumenggung, the leader of my tribal group known as the Suku Anak Dalam (Sanak). My wife is Elizabeth Suani. We have two children. The first one is Yemima. She is in grade 2 at primary school and her younger sister is Tamar Wulan Sari. There are 23 people and seven families in my Sanak group.

Previously we lived nomadic lives and our main livelihood was hunting boars. Today their population is decreasing because the palm oil plantations have taken over the jungle. This meant we were facing difficulties to fulfil our daily needs.

Before becoming Christians, my group had beliefs inherited from our parents. We worshipped the 'Behelo', the one unseen we believe to be in power. The intermediary between us

and the Behelo is an elder. He prays and meditates in a quiet place to the Behelo. When someone is sick, this elder prays to Behelo so that the sick person gets healed.

In October 2017, Rev Anton Ben Gurion Hutagalung and his wife visited us at our camp with a toke, a merchant, who regularly comes to get the boars we hunted. They wanted to invite us to join their Christian gathering.

Now I feel a peaceful life because I have faith in Jesus. God has given me a new life and salvation in Jesus Christ the Lord. Previously none of us goes to school. We do not know how to read and write. But our thanks go to Pastor Hutagalun and his wife, evangelist Donna, who encouraged us to send my child to a public school.

Since becoming a Christian, I have been more aware of how to love others. I realise I am a sinner. When there is someone who harms me, I realise that God wants me to forgive like Jesus who has forgiven us.

Previously we lived nomadic lives, but I thank God now we have settled in the middle of a palm plantation in which there is already a church built by the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod through GKLI, as well as several houses for us to live in, supported by the LCA.

Thank you very much for your wonderful help.

May the Lord bless you.

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

LCA International Mission provides opportunities for you to support grassroots missions such as GKLI's outreach to the Sanak people.

How can you support this work?

If you would like to support the mission to the indigenous peoples of Indonesia through the GKLI, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

**PARTNERING
WITH THE**

◦ GOSPEL ◦



St John's Unley is partnering with Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia's Bishop Steven Lawrence, who is completing a doctorate in theology through Australian Lutheran College while remaining bishop of the ELCM.



St John's Unley Mission Team members, from left, are Pastor Andrew Brook (ex-officio), Julian Pfitzner, David Jaensch, Glenn Schultz, Robert Hoff, Glenice Hartwich, Warren Schirmer, Leanne Jaensch. Absent: (Inset) Paula Meyer

Teaming up to live out mission goals

The members of St John's Lutheran Church Unley in suburban Adelaide have supported a variety of mission ventures over the years. Some have travelled to Cambodia and India while others have engaged in building projects in Aboriginal communities.

However, it was only in late 2019 that the congregation formed a mission team to oversee, encourage and support members to live as a missionary community, both locally and in the wider world.

St John's Mission Team members asked LCA International Mission program officer Erin Kerber to help them identify a mission initiative that would suit their congregation and its financial resources. This led to forming a partnership with the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM), Steven Lawrence.

The team aims to support Bishop Steven as he completes a PhD in theology at Australian Lutheran College (ALC). As he will continue as ELCM bishop at the same time, his studies are expected to take five to six years.

Christians of all denominations make up less than 10 per cent of the population in Malaysia, while more than 60 per cent are Muslim, 20 per cent are Buddhist and approximately 6 per cent are Hindu. The ELCM has 28 congregations, served by about 30 pastors. The Mission Team says it sees the partnership as 'a wonderful

opportunity to engage with a church leader who oversees a Lutheran community which lives in a predominantly Muslim country'.

'In supporting Bishop Steven, we hope to support the mission of the ELCM as they seek to explore how they bring the good news of Jesus to their own communities. They have just completed a decade with the goal of "Each one reach one each year", highlighting their intention to reach out with Jesus' love. In this, we share similar goals!

'Bishop Steven will also attend ALC in Adelaide at various times over his PhD studies. We see these as great opportunities to engage with him, provide hospitality while he is apart from his wife Susan and four children, and encourage him in his studies and as bishop.

'The ELCM faces similar issues as the LCA NZ, namely the very low numbers of pastoral students pointing to growing shortages of pastors.

'Our goals are to regularly connect on WhatsApp; pray for Bishop Steven; build a mutual relationship of care, trust and understanding; provide some financial support for his studies and travels to Australia and provide hospitality when he visits Adelaide. This is a mutual two-way relationship, where we can learn and grow from his experiences as much as those we might offer to Bishop Steven.'

How are we joining with God partnering in the gospel?

LCA International Mission supports and resources LCA NZ congregations in partnership with churches in Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea.

How can you partner?

If you would like to learn more about forming a congregation partnership with a community in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, or Papua New Guinea, please contact us.

TRAINING
IN THE
GOSPEL

SUPPORT FOR SCHOLARSHIPS CHANGES LIVES

In Peninsular Malaysia, which is also known as West Malaysia, there are 18 indigenous tribes. The ancestors of these Orang Asli tribes were the first people to populate the peninsula more than 4,000 years ago. Since then, most have continued a hunter-gatherer and small-scale agricultural lifestyle.

Being an Orang Asli in Malaysia means facing many of the difficulties experienced by indigenous groups across the globe. Most of the forests that they depend on for their livelihoods have been subject to rapid development, including intensive logging and the expansion of palm oil plantations and other large-scale agricultural crops. This means Orang Asli have become one of the most vulnerable communities in Malaysia.

Another challenge is a low standard of education, with most Orang Asli people receiving only primary school-level formal education. It is therefore particularly significant that, at the end of 2021, Bah Jamal Bin Ngah graduated from Sabah Theological Seminary (STS) in Kota Kinabalu, East Malaysia. He is only the second male Orang Asli student to do so.

The Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM) began a ministry to the Orang Asli people in the 1970s. Since that time LCM has been providing funds and personnel to support the ministry, together with partner churches.

The Orang Asli Ministry has 11 congregations and 11 outreach points. These are served by six pastors, 12 pastoral assistants and four teachers.

Pastor Bah Jamal is now serving at the 19th Mile congregation in the Cameron Highlands, the region in which he grew up. He is particularly passionate about working with young Orang Asli people and sharing the gospel with those who don't yet know Jesus. Pastor Bah Jamal believes that when evangelising, it is important to be motivated and patient, to walk in prayer, hope and love, and the word of God.

He has clear hopes for the future of his ministry and his people and to see the Lutheran Church in Malaysia improve in many aspects of its Orang Asli ministry, including faith-building, teaching the gospel, love towards God and one another, improving lifestyles of congregations and economic activities.

'Pray for the future ministry of the church', says Pastor Bah Jamal. 'May God help me in the planning of our ministry in the future.'

Pastor Bah Jamal was able to complete his studies through STS with the help of a scholarship provided by LCA International Mission and Lutheran Women of Australia. Your support of scholarships to the Orang Asli community continues to change lives and supports local churches to reach out with the gospel.



How are we training in the gospel?

LCA International Mission provides financial assistance to the Orang Asli ministry of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and an annual scholarship for the training of Orang Asli candidates for ordination through the Sabah Theological Seminary.

How can you support this work?

If you would like to support the Orang Asli ministry, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL



TASTE AND SEE THAT OUR GOD IS GOOD

Anna Julian speaks with quiet and deep confidence. It is a confidence that comes from a lifetime of knowing that Jesus loves her and that this love allows her to love and serve him.

Anna has been involved in translation for English speakers who attend the biannual Women's Bible Conference in Myanmar. The conference gathers Lutheran women from different ethnic groups across the country. Together they celebrate the joy they have in common in Jesus, as his precious children.

Anna's mother and grandmother also loved Jesus. They prayed and read God's word with Anna. This had a profound impact on Anna. When snack sellers and Buddhist monks passed by her house, Anna would share the gospel.

After she married, Anna moved away to live with her mother-in-law's family. The Buddhist monks told her mother that 'now there is no-one to share the gospel with us'. Today, when Hindu women come to Anna for housework, Anna uses the opportunity to share the gospel.

The women's bible conferences have not been held in recent years due to Myanmar's military coup and COVID-19, but Anna has continued her ministry. She has met with

people from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar, by travelling twice a month to a village three hours away.

They meet with Hindu women and teach the 20 children there the traditional Tamil language. The women are open to having their children taught a Bible verse and a song about Jesus in Tamil at the start of each lesson. It is through the children that Anna believes the Holy Spirit will be present to their families.

When Anna meets with people who have heard the gospel but are not yet resting in the grace of Jesus Christ, she tells them that she doesn't want to convert them. Instead, she encourages them to simply 'taste and see that our God is the living God'.

We read and came to know from the news and media that daily life in Myanmar is hard. Bombings and fighting continue, with many young people losing their lives. Recent waves of COVID have devastated communities as hospitals are closed, vaccinations are few and many of the medical staff are fighting the junta.

But despite the hardships, the church is alive in Myanmar. People are reading God's word, his love letter to his people, and clinging to his faithfulness. They are tasting and seeing that our God is good.

How are we proclaiming the gospel?

LCA International Mission provides speakers for the women's conference in Myanmar, along with funding the event. This conference not only provides important training and fellowship for those who attend, but it also fosters greater cooperation between the four Lutheran World Federation member churches in Myanmar. As soon as the security situation allows, this important conference will resume.

How can you support this work?

If you would like to support the women's conference in Myanmar, please refer to the donation form on the back of this edition.

COMPUTERS NEEDED FOR LUTHERAN STUDENTS IN PNG

We take for granted the use of computers. They are part of our entertainment, everyday communications and work life. They allow us to readily find information and aid our learning.

In Papua New Guinea (PNG) computers are not a readily available resource, even for those who are studying. Where access is available, it's often in a common room where many people must share just one or two computers.

Giesa Panpan, the ministerial training secretary for the Evangelical Lutheran Church–PNG, says while 'computers and other technologies in schools and institutions are very helpful teaching and learning tools', many PNG schools and institutions do not have access to them.

The five national church institutions of the ELC–PNG – three seminaries, a college and a lay people's National Evangelist Training Centre (NETC) – and four district women's ministry schools that operate under the Ministerial Training Department face this reality. Two computers cater for 50 students at the NETC at Amron in Madang Province, while just one desktop computer and printer cater

for 90 students at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae.

Many faculty members cannot obtain a private laptop, desktop or smartphone to do their work. Likewise, the demand for computers from students is high. Currently, on average, there are 20 students to each computer in church institutions.

'All teaching and learning manuscripts are required to be produced with typewriting, yet the lack of this vital technology suppresses that intention and hinders progressive efforts', Giesa says. 'Students expect their teachers to produce typed notes, yet some teachers don't meet that demand. Most students submit their projects and assignments in [handwriting] because they are either computer illiterate or cannot access computers to do their work. Besides that, the books in the school libraries are very old and hard copies are not sufficiently available for everyone's easy access.'

Giesa asks that Lutheran schools in Australia and other LCA NZ workplaces consider donating second-hand laptops that are to be replaced, to the ELC–PNG.

'Some computers will be placed in faculty common rooms or offices to help them gather information and produce notes for teaching and learning', he says. 'The student computers will be kept in the computer labs and used for training students. After school hours, students will use them for typewriting or to access books and information.'

If you feel that you could provide this kind of support, we would love to hear from you!

How can you support this work?

You can donate working computers (less than five years old) that you no longer need, and they will be refurbished and sent to PNG for use by students studying to be church workers. Please email lcaim@lca.org.au if you want to support people in this way.

How are we training in the gospel?

In addition to providing LCA pastors to serve as lecturers at seminaries in PNG, LCA International Mission also seeks to address the practical needs impacting the training of church workers in the ELC–PNG.





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

- Anna Julian, as she works alongside the women of Myanmar, teaching language to the children and planning a way forward for future women's ministry conferences. Pray for her continued strength and passion for Jesus
- Bishop Steven Lawrence, as he continues his studies. May he grow in his love for his saviour and find hope and love in God's promises as he studies the word. Pray for good health to allow his study to continue

Prayer is so important because many of our partner churches are working in new territory for the kingdom of God and spiritual attack is their everyday reality.

- The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea, which seeks to find ways to support its students studying at seminary by providing computers to allow better access to study resources. Pray, too, for easier access to computers
- GKLI Sanak Mission in Indonesia, that they would be encouraged as they minister to the indigenous people around them. Pray that they may bring the love and truth of Jesus to a people searching for hope and purpose

- All the family of God who have the joy of living in his love, that we may have the courage and the love to share the good news we live in daily with those close to us and in our wider communities

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

They can also be accessed via the LCA International Mission eNews – to sign up, go to www.lca.org.au/enews

'Lord, renew your church, begin with me!'



I'M JOINING IN GOD'S MISSION BY *volunteering*

You can experience firsthand how God's love is coming to life through the word-and-action gospel work of our partner churches.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND – CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH TEACHER

Many of the LCA International Mission partner churches would like native English speakers to share their faith and develop friendships with their members while encouraging them in English conversation. There are in-country and online opportunities available.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND – STAMPS RECEIVER

Volunteer stamps receivers are needed to collect, clean, sort and send out bundles of used stamps to be sold for the Stamps for Mission program. Receivers are also advocates for the program in the community where they live.

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**.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND – CONGREGATION REP

Being a volunteer congregational representative for LCA International Mission in your home congregation involves encouraging others in mission by sharing resources and promoting LCA International Mission opportunities.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND – VIDEO EDITOR

LCA International Mission uses video to promote God's mission among our partner churches and is seeking volunteers to edit these for use at synods, Lutheran women's conventions and speaking engagements in churches and schools.



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

We take great care of your financial gifts. You can be confident they will assist our partner Lutheran churches to bring the good news of Jesus to their communities.

... LCA International Mission's work with our partner churches

(Please indicate the ministries and programs you would like to support and write the amount of your gift/s in the spaces provided.)

- The Women's ministry Conference, **Myanmar** \$ _____
- Contribution towards the scholarship for Bishop Steven Lawrence, **Malaysia** \$ _____
- Transportation of computers to **Papua New Guinea** \$ _____
- Ministry to the Orang Asli people in **Malaysia** \$ _____
- GKLI Sanak mission in **Indonesia** \$ _____
- I would like to leave a bequest for LCA International Mission in my will (please send me information)

You can support one or more of the above mission projects in any of the following ways:

- online at www.lca.org.au/international-mission/act-now/donate/ (credit card)
- OR fill out the form below (credit card or cheque)
- OR Electronic Funds Transfer; please contact LCA International Mission on **08 8267 7300** for more details

Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____ (cheques payable to LCA International Mission)

Please debit my Visa MasterCard

Card no

Expiry / CCV

Amount \$ _____

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Email _____

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

Please send me a receipt