



# Section 21

## 2019 Convention of Synod

LCA International Mission Report

## LCA INTERNATIONAL MISSION REPORT

The apostle Paul reminds us of the good news that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved – but of course you can't call on the name of Jesus for forgiveness, life and salvation unless you have first heard of him. And so Paul reminds us that the mission of the church, the salvation of souls, is intimately connected to the preaching of the Word of God – because faith comes through hearing (Romans 10:10-17).

LCA International Mission is charged by you, the Lutheran Church of Australia, with the incredible responsibility and privilege of partnering with churches throughout South East Asia in a way that helps them proclaim God's word of Law and Gospel ever more clearly into the challenging contexts in which they live and serve. And as we do so, we receive great blessing and encouragement from our partners as we learn from them about what it means to be a mission focussed church in an increasingly antagonistic culture.

The way the LCA offers this support has changed over the years. Their needs are not the same today as they were 30 years ago and so we are always seeking to adapt in ways that properly support them. In years gone by the LCA had many full-time missionaries serving overseas. But as you are well aware this has changed.

Today Mick Hauser serves as the only LCA funded missionary serving internationally as a lecturer at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae, Papua New Guinea. It is true that there are many more LCA people serving in mission around the world with organisations such as Interserve, Wycliffe Bible Translators and as volunteers within our own structures, but Mick is the only missionary currently called by our church. LCA-International Mission is pleased to serve as a conduit to facilitate the support of other LCA people serving internationally and information on those included in this will be available at the convention.

LCA – International Mission has a key role in supporting our partner churches in fulfilling their desire to grow in their understanding of Lutheran theology and practice. This grass roots movement has developed as church leaders, pastors and members have heard the good news of God's saving love in Christ most clearly through their Lutheran partners, and want to be better equipped to share this life changing message with their people. This is a common thread right across South East Asia and so one way we are supporting them is by helping to establish Lutheran Study Centres where pastors who have been trained in non-Lutheran colleges and seminaries, can come to be equipped to serve as distinctly Lutheran pastors. The LCA has long been involved in the Lutheran Study Centre in Sabah, Malaysia and in March this year, the 13 bishops of our Indonesian partner churches signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Lutheran Study Centre in Pematangsiantar, Indonesia that will serve those churches and help make the gospel be heard more clearly throughout Indonesia for years to come.

While it's true that the LCA is a small church and we might be tempted to doubt our place on the world stage, I am amazed at how God is using the gifts he has blessed us with to extend his mission in our region. Our impact as a church on the mission of God throughout South East Asia does not reflect our size, but rather God's faithfulness. It's not because we are such a remarkable church, but because we have been gifted with a solid, clear and unambiguously biblical theology that proclaims the completed work of Jesus for sinners like you and me.

One such area of strength that is bearing much fruit is the training we are offering in Biblical Reconciliation. Pastor Paul Kerber serves as Assistant to the Bishop – Reconciliation Ministries and part of his call is to partner with LCA – International Mission to better equip our partners to proclaim and enact the gospel through biblical reconciliation. Currently we are offering two 6 week scholarships

for Indonesian seminary lecturers, to be trained in this ministry in Australia through an intensive program which they will then assist in teaching in their home churches. Pastor Kerber also runs in country workshops at least once a year (in 2019 this will include Japan in April and Indonesia in August). When I met one of the scholarship recipients from this program in Indonesia late last year, you couldn't wipe the smile off his face. He declared in front of church leaders, 'I preach the gospel every Sunday now because of what I learnt!' He confessed that he had never know what it meant to be saved by grace and he had never known the freedom of being forgiven for Christ's sake alone. Yes, we're a small church, but your support of International Mission in things like these scholarships mean we are having a huge impact on the lives of those our partners serve.

Our partner churches are of one mind when it comes to the importance of catechesis – of teaching members young and old the mysteries of the Christian faith. And sometimes we don't realise the treasures we are sitting on.

Many of you will have heard how the Lutheran Church Singapore got hold of our 1980's confirmation resource Growing as God's people and translated it into Chinese. This book has now also been translated into Bahasa Indonesian and is being received with incredible enthusiasm in Singapore, Malaysia and into China where the Singapore church is actively working. Sometimes our support is as simple as giving our partners permission to copy resources that we are no longer even using – and it's amazing to see God breathe new life into the dusty covers of these resources.

LCA – International Mission currently supports the mission of God in Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Across these countries, members of the LCA have an opportunity to partner with us as personal volunteers, in congregational and school partnerships, through prayer, financial support and promotion, along with a myriad of other ways. The LCA – International Mission team is here to serve you and we would be delighted to hear from you if you have a desire to serve in any way. Our program officers Erin Kerber ([erin.kerber@lca.org.au](mailto:erin.kerber@lca.org.au)) and Nevin Nitschke ([nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au](mailto:nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au)), do a remarkable job of coordinating a lot of our on the ground work and are always ready to answer your questions. The opportunities for you to be involved are many, but it's vital that we remember they are all aimed at supporting our partners proclaim the saving work of Jesus for the salvation of the world.

As we engage with our partners for the sake of the gospel, it is becoming more and more clear that this is very much a two-way relationship through which God is blessing and strengthening the LCA for our local mission into the future. As our neighbours are better equipped to serve in their own contexts, they have much to teach us about reaching out with the message of hope in an increasingly antagonistic society and one day, they may well be the ones who send missionaries to this country to help us reach out to our changing society.

I thank God for your support of LCA International Mission, because the work we do is not our work, it's yours. You are the ones who make it possible for LCA International Mission to support our partners, make Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins known to the people they serve. And hearing that good news, to believe. The light of your faith continues to shine brightly beyond our shores as LCA International Mission serves in your name, that others may know the hope that is ours in Christ our Lord.

Respectfully submitted  
Rev Matt Anker  
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