



Bondia Timor Leste

Edition 5, July 2011

"We are more confident and sure where we are going because we don't stand alone – we know you (Australians) stand with us". Mana Tanti

At the beginning of June, Robert Benn, Kevin Murray and Rob Duncanson travelled to Timor Leste for a short trip. They spent time with the church leaders and met with the Synod Executive as well as visiting some of the congregations.

Into the Hills.

We travelled up the mountains past the Dare memorial where there is a large ANZAC service held each year towards the small church of Kaisabe.



Kaisabe Presbyterian Church

None of us had been to this place before, and although it wasn't very far in a straight line from Dili, it took us 90 minutes to get there travelling up the steep and windy roads. We were told that we might have to walk the last part of the journey as the road had washed away into the valley far below. As it turned out, we got to the dangerous part of the road to be met by people who had quickly gathered to repair the road for our arrival. They were

pretty sure it would hold, so off we went, with a couple of bumps and we arrived safely on the other side.

We gathered with the people in their simple church with a

magnificent view.

They were thankful for the chairs which had been provided for them through a gift from Australia. As we talked they shared their needs and concerns with us.

There are about 100 members in this congregation, and they are very poor. The last twelve months have been especially challenging for them as it has been so wet that many have not been able to plant crops.

Sometimes the Roman Catholic Sisters provide aid, but sometimes when the protestants line up for assistance, they are asked, "Why do you come here? Go to your own church!"

Education is a big issue for them. 40% of the people in the area can neither read nor write. In such hard times it is difficult for families to be able to afford to send their children to school. Even though Government schools are free, there is still the cost of uniforms and books which the families must pay.

We spoke with a young lady, Dina Pereira, of about 13 years. Dina has a beautiful smile and a vivacious personality. She related to us that she walks every day to Dili to get to school. It only takes an hour to walk to school, but even for this strong and fit girl, the steepness of terrain means that it takes her 3 hours to walk home.

We dream of cable-cars and school busses, but Dina just gets on with life as she knows it, undertaking the grinding hard labour of her daily commute to gain the education which she



Dina Pereira

values so highly.

"Bondia Timor Leste" – the name means, "Good Morning East Timor". It is produced by a sub-committee of Mission Partners. The publishers of this newsletter pray that it might be used to awaken interest in the Presbyterian Church which is nearest to Australian shores.
IF YOU WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO THIS NEWSLETTER, (its free) please contact the Editor.

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Biggest Concern.

What do the church leaders really want from us?

When we met with the congregation in the Samaria church in the Remexio sub-district, the secretary, Domingos spoke to us about their situation.

He said *"we are a young church – look at us, we are like a baby – you take care of a baby! Your visit tells us that you have come to take care of the baby. We have no gift to give you but we can do something – we can support you by praying."*

There are many times when the leadership of the Timorese church

is intensely aware of the fragility of their circumstances.

One lady, Mana Tanti, expressed it this way, “*We are very nervous when we have problems in the church, therefore we look to you for prayer and support. We need to get on with the work because there are many souls out there who are unsaved.*”

They have many needs but their greatest concern is for the advance of the Gospel. This was put most bluntly by Pastor Cipriano who said “*We work in this church with or without rice, with or without petrol, with or without many things, but we must do the work.*”

There are many ways in which we can help the people of Timor Leste, but the thing they really want from us the most is partnership in prayer. They long for the things that God alone can provide – strength to be faithful and wise, and effectiveness in reaching out into the world.

From an outsider’s perception, there seems to be a growing fervour for evangelism and to know and follow the Lord.

Will you pray for the spiritual strength of the church of the Lord Jesus in this land?

Challenges to Communication

One of the problems which we face in working with the people of Timor Leste is the issue of communication.

For example, AP was very kindly sent to the Moderator, Arlindo Marcal for over a year when one was returned to sender. Of course we asked Arlindo about this, and were amazed to find that he had not received any copies at all – ever!

When we asked if we could send it to a different address, he said

not to bother as it simply wouldn’t get through.

Without a postal system, we are left with emails. We have had problems with this in the past too, but over the last 12 months or so, it seems to have become much more reliable and now even attachments seem to get through regularly (even if at a slow rate).

A bigger problem however, is that of language.

Very few Timorese speak English.

Some of the young people know a little English and are keen to practice it. Amongst the church leaders, there are really only two who are fluent in English.

Most of the leaders speak Indonesian, and a few speak some Portuguese. All of the church leaders speak Tetun, but some of the congregational members only speak their local language.

The intersection of those who speak English and those who have email, narrows us down to a sample of just two!

Both these two men, Pastors Arlindo and Daniel, are very busy men in the church and also in other employment.

Some people have asked if they can have names and addresses of Timorese who they can build a relationship with. That’s a great idea, but when there is no postal system, almost no-one has a computer/email and hardly anyone speaks English, it makes it very hard.

That wretched tower of Babel strikes again!

But should we only pray for those with whom we can communicate directly? Fortunately, God knows their language and ours, and he has made us to be brothers and sisters together.

Dili Congregation.

We have asked for prayer in the past for the Dili congregation and their need for a place to meet.

Rev Arlindo writes:

As you know, we at the Dili congregation need a building. We have been conducting our services under a temporary tent for more than two years now. And I do not see, at least at the moment, any possibility of renting a place or building a church in the near future.

Apart from the obvious issue of shelter from the elements including tropical downpours, they also struggle with perceptions of credibility and accessibility with their current meeting arrangements.

The Timor sub-committee of Mission Partners is working with the Synod Executive to work out ways to help them address these issues – we’ll keep you posted as things develop.

Coming Up.

In October a team from **Mt Gambier** is travelling to Timor to undertake practical work at the Samaria congregation. This is the first work-party to go there, and we have kept it small so that we circumvent all sorts of logistical issues.

One of the big issues was the need for an interpreter. Thankfully the Lord has provided a young Timorese lady, Ameta, who will fulfil this role.

2012 is an **election year** in Timor Leste. In the first part of the year there will be an election for the President and then about a month after that is finalised there will be an election for members of parliament. What will this mean for the stability of this fledgling nation? God alone fully knows. Our hope and prayer is that it will be uneventful, but history

also shows that some will want to bring disruption and distress if they are able to.

There will be a **teaching week** in November. This will focus on preaching skills and Biblical leadership. These are very important issues for the Timorese church.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste plans to hold its **first official Synod** meeting within the next six months. At the moment they only have a provisional constitution. At this meeting they hope to approve a finalised constitution which will give them a solid foundation from which to work and also a basis on which they will be able to make partnerships with other churches (like ours).

- pastors.
- ✓ Horse for a pastor.
- ✓ Scholarship money for students to attend Uni or High School.
- ✓ Assistance for young school children with school uniforms and books.



Loes Manse before renovation



Loes Manse after some work

Recent Ministry

Major highlights include:

- ✓ Major rebuilding of the Pastor's house at Loes. Transformation from palm-frond walls and dirt floors to block walls and concrete floors. (see pics)
- ✓ Intro visit by Kevin Murray, Missions Partners Director.
- ✓ Visit to render assistance and advice regarding polity issues.
- ✓ Assistance with travel and accommodation costs for members of Synod Executive to meet in Dili.
- ✓ Sponsorship towards Evangelism Explosion course in Aileu district.
- ✓ Sponsorship for "Dealing with the Occult" course held in Liquiçá district.
- ✓ Building kitchen / toilet for Liquiçá church.
- ✓ Building toilet for Samaria congregation.
- ✓ Financial support for

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

1. **Pray** (see below for points).
2. **Give**

All monies should be sent to Mission Partners in Sydney and clearly marked for Timor Leste. Address below.

Mission Partners will provide a receipt for every payment and the EPC will account to Mission Partners for all gifts they receive.

PLEASE PRAY

1. That the EPC-TL will have a firm foundation upon which to build a solid Biblical Church. That the coming Synod meeting will be a good step in this process.
2. That together we may be able to develop a plan to expedite the translation, publication and distribution of the Bible in

Tetun.

3. For the church leaders who serve self-sacrificially for the sake of the gospel work in TL, that the Lord would provide for all their needs. (most receive very little, if any, salary).
4. For many folk who are living in poverty.
5. For the trip to be held in October by a work-party from Mt Gambier.
6. For many Timorese who are showing an interest in the gospel, that they would be encouraged to repent, follow Jesus and that they would then be well disciplined.
7. That the Dili congregation would find a new place to meet which will be accessible for all who may wish to come along.
8. For people who continue to struggle to come to terms with past traumatic experiences.
9. That the EPC-TL will be able to minister effectively to many isolated groups of Christians in TL and beyond.

STOP PRESS!

Mission Partners new website is up and running. This newsletter and many other great resources available from it.

<http://missionpartners.org.au>

If you would like to **SUBSCRIBE** to this newsletter (**it's FREE**), please contact the Editor (details previous page).

If you would like to **GIVE** towards gospel ministry in Timor Leste, please send donations to Mission Partners, and clearly designate them for this work. Address: 8 Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point NSW 2213.

