



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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Toronto – Papua New Guinea Reformed Churches Bible College – October 2014

In this issue of Mission News Rev. Versteeg and Rev. Kleijn will report on the work being done at the Reformed Churches Bible College. In the next issue they will report on the work among the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea.

Greetings

Greetings in Christ our Lord! It is time for another half-year report. There have not been tremendous changes this past half year. Nevertheless, it is good to reflect on what has taken place. Further, we can be thankful that we can continue to do the Lord's work here in PNG in the form of teaching and preaching unhindered and in good health and strength. We do not want to take these gifts for granted in a world in which there is so much turmoil and unrest. Even though we may not have great strides to report at this time, we trust the Lord will continue to work in the hearts and minds of his own as he continues his church gathering work through the regular and faithful preaching and teaching of his Word.

Rev. Versteeg

In November we had our seventh graduation and closing of another Reformed Churches Bible College school year. The year started off with a small class in both the Certificate and Diploma program. For a second time in our history we did not have any new interested persons joining our school. That should not come as a total surprise, as our church groups are also yet quite small church communities and thus there are but few potential students for our college. However, next year does look promising. Even before the closing of this present year, we have already had a number of enquiries that may have our college compound "bursting at the seams" so to speak next year. However, we will wait and see as one really never knows who will follow through

with their enquiry. It is nevertheless very encouraging to have a fair number of enquiries already even before the closing of this present year!

This present school year started in February with three students in the second year of the two year Certificate program and three students in the first year of the three year Diploma program for the training into the ministry of the Word. Further, we had one graduate student, Br. Joel Sine, doing further study in preparation for going to classis to seek permission to speak an edifying Word. With thanksgiving to our Lord, he did receive this permission at Classis October 9, 2014.

A smaller student body did not necessary translate into less work. Even though there is less correcting of assignments, the same amount of material needs to be taught. Further, we miss some of the older students who tended to be big brothers or sisters to newer/ younger students. That also gave us a little more work.



Rev Versteeg teaching Exegesis in the Diploma program, RCBC



RCBC students picking greens for selling at Gordon's Market in Port Moresby

Academically, however, all the students are doing quite well. We may anticipate one student from the Certificate class to qualify for the Diploma program next year.

However, as we began our last block of studies this year one of the present Diploma students decided to discontinue his studies. It did not really come as a surprise. From the beginning he wanted to be a teacher and not a preacher but could not yet enter the Teachers' College in town. We did encourage him to enter the diploma program for it would help him to become a more knowledgeable Christian should the Lord open the door to him to become a teacher and should he end up teaching religion in the school.

Even though most of the courses for both programs are set and have been written, we are still polishing them up each time we teach and adapting them culturally as we grow to understand the people better. Further, new courses are being added according to need and ability and time to teach them. This year Sects and Cults were added to the program. Next year we hope to add Apologetics to the program.

Rev. Kleyn

I teach mainly in the Certificate class. A lot of time went into teaching and preparing for classes. For me this year's material was new. It has been previously taught by others, but it still takes some time to make the material my own – and so a considerable amount of time went into preparing the courses.

In addition to teaching at the Bible College, one of my tasks is to take care of security. This past year Papua New Guinea raised the minimum wage and this has made it tricky for us to keep security costs low. Some security breaches did occur this past year, but we are thankful that a new security fence could go up around the Bible College gardens. This will hopefully prevent further stealing of our garden produce.

I am also responsible to supervise work in the Bible College gardens and keep them functioning. That too has been a challenge this year partly because of the low number of students. Bible College students are expected to work three days a week in the Bible College gardens, as well as be involved in selling produce from these gardens to make a little bit of profit for the Bible College. This is done to keep their school fees down. It has, however, been quite the challenge to encourage the students to keep at it and do a good job. At the moment it seems as if the Bible College gardens are giving too little profit to be of any help in keeping overall costs down. The garden income take away expenditure this past year has amounted to less than \$200. This amount should be a lot higher, but part of the problem is that I simply do not have enough time to invest properly into the garden and work with the students.

This year Rev. Alan Douma was away on furlough several months of the year. During these times I took over taking care of the store and providing food rations for the students. Thankfully the store has been making quite a decent profit this year – an overall profit of about \$1000. This may be partly due to the higher wages of our security guards, since they are the most faithful customers of our store, but maybe also due to there being more students here with money than in the past.

However, the chicken meat project has made very little profit this year. For this project we buy day old chicks every week and raise them for a number of weeks and then sell them as live chickens for their meat. But since several big meat bird projects started this past year in PNG, we have been unable to buy day old chicks. We hope and pray this will change in the coming months.

We thank you for your prayerful support.

*Yours in Christ's service,
Rev. H. Versteeg
Rev. C. Kleyn*

November 2014 meeting of the Board of Governors of the Reformed Churches Bible College (l-r: Rev. Versteeg, Rev. Douma, CM Nawai Renagi, Francis Aoae, CM Aisi Kosa)





Indigenous Missions in Muslim Lands

By Pastor Tim Burden



MERF's International Council opened with a moving message on Hebrews 4:15, our Christ's glorious sovereignty, sinless humanity, and all-sufficient sympathy. What an encouragement to rest in such wonderful truths. We rejoice in the Gospel's progress and victory over the forces of darkness.

Indonesia

A MERF-supported evangelist has gone to live among the "forgotten" Lauge tribe of Central Sulawesi. Radio and Internet work in five Indonesian languages is bearing fruit. "Listener communities" of 30-40 or more gather to hear broadcasts. These are visited monthly by a follow up coordinator. Diaconal aid projects also continue. Help to East Java Muslim communities following the volcanic eruption opened many Gospel opportunities. Converts need prayer for perseverance amid pressure to revert to Islam.

South Sudan

MERF has provided fishing and mosquito nets to many needy families displaced by fighting. The conflict has claimed many lives, including several pastors and evangelists. Gospel hope and Bible teaching is broadcast daily in the Nuer language, produced in MERF's ministry center in **Lokichoggio, Kenya**. Despite the war, South Sudanese students were able to reach the center to receive intensive biblical training. Three 14-week courses were held in 2014.



MERF also ministers to the primitive Turkana people in northern Kenya.

Sudan

In this predominantly Muslim nation, MERF supports Bible teaching in schools, including supplying books and teaching materials, pastors and evangelists under local church oversight, as well as an evangelistic prison work. MERF also partners with local churches to share the Gospel weekly over national TV and radio, using airtime freely provided by the government.

Above: MERF International Council 2014;
Below: Pakistan Bible Literacy class

Pakistan

Gospel messages are broadcast in Urdu on cable TV in several cities. Bible literacy programs are run for all ages. Annual Family Conventions serve thousands. With about 50 percent of the Pakistani population malnourished, there are great diaconal needs. Outreach to the needy includes free medical care in two MERF-supported clinics for poor Christians and their Muslim neighbors. Hundreds of needy children receive Christian education at four Calvin Academies. To keep costs down, scrap building materials are recycled for school furnishings with great ingenuity. This year the schools' utility bills were slashed by MERF installing solar panels. Bibles are given to students who promise to read them with their illiterate families.



Egypt

Arabic publications, church extension, and leadership training takes place. Thirteen books in the "Building Blocks of Faith" Sunday School series based on the Shorter Catechism have been published. Author Dr. Gareth Crossley led a pastors' conference in Alexandria on "Jesus Christ, the Theme of the Old Testament." Pastors are benefiting from his book which will be published in Arabic.

The **New Minya Project** among poor people continues to be fruitful. Now four years old, it includes over seventy families. MERF supports a young pastor to lead the work. Another project has sixty people gathering for Bible study, in addition to prayer meetings. The government has given land for a church building, so Egyptian churches are putting together funds for construction work.

*"He who dwells
in the secret place
of the Most High
shall abide under
the shadow of the
Almighty"
—Psalm 91:1*

North Africa

Christians in Libya suffer greatly. The congregations at Benghazi and Tripoli have been disbanded, and some 200 Egyptians of Christian background were killed by Muslim fanatics. Elsewhere in North Africa, news is encouraging. In Tunisia, political power has shifted from Islam to secularism, providing Gospel opportunity. In Algeria, there are at least twenty-eight worshipping groups in the capital, with many thousands of believers across the country.

Lebanon

MERF's daughter, Lebanon Reformed Fellowship (LRF), does Gospel broadcasting, Internet-based outreach, Christian counseling, and care for Iraqi, Syrian, and other refugees. Even local Muslim leaders seek LRF help for refugees traumatized by war. Nearly 2 million refugees is a heavy burden on Lebanon's 4.5 million. Most are Syrians, with large numbers of Iraqis and Palestinians, many in refugee camps. Pray that Lebanon would be spared Islamists' violence spilling over from Syria. Muslims are attending churches in numbers never seen before and many have professed faith in Christ! Pray also for God's power to attend Gospel proclamation and to restrain evil.

Syria

Gospel witness and diaconal aid in both Damascus and Aleppo are bringing hope to suffering Syrians. In **Damascus**, embroidery and handicraft projects give dignity and generate income for families sheltering there. They lost everything when their towns were overrun by Islamists. Bible studies and children's programs bring them spiritual refreshment.

Thousands have fled war-torn **Aleppo**. Only the elderly, the very poor, and the dedicated remain. Despite this, church attendance has increased. Spiritual care is given with aid to the most needy, including food packages, medicine, fuel, school supplies, and rent subsidies. A Saturday program offers children a hearty meal with Bible teaching, songs, prayers, and games. Praise God for His light in the darkness and pray for peace.

Radio & Internet Ministries

Farsi language websites *Shadkami* and *Roshdino* have been honed and greatly used. "Roshdino" makes the Farsi Bible available to

those who have none. It also gives the spiritual nurture of seventy-six downloadable books. Many thousands have visited the site from **Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey**, and others parts of the world.

Dedicated Arab teams use both the Internet and traditional radio to share Christ. Social media in the **Arab World** is stimulating daring exploration of new ideas beyond Islam. Thousands visit the "*Dardasha*" (chat) website and Facebook page. Also an Arabic Facebook page on the "Sayings of Jesus the Messiah" has thousands of fans, mostly of Muslim background. Pray for the hundreds receiving personal responses.

Somali broadcasts bring light in great darkness and nurture young believers. Pray for the training of spiritual leaders. Many are also being reached in the **Saudi Arabia** and **Yemen**.

In God's time, more and more Muslims are hungry for the difference Jesus makes to their lives. The Lord has raised indigenous laborers for faithful, fruitful, and cost-effective Gospel work.

Above: Pastor and Mrs. Tim Burden with Indonesian staff; Below: Children's ministry in Aleppo, Syria



MERF-Canada

Thank you for your faithful support! Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through www.canadahelps.org