



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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New Hope – West Timor

Update December 2015

Word of Mouth

Typically one of the first questions asked by visitors to New Hope is: “How do these children end up here?” This is a valid question, since the children living at New Hope do come from various different islands, and some even from abroad! As children of the Lord we know that there is no such thing as “random” or “luck.” Over the years we have been blessed to witness this again and again: he leads, he directs, it is our Father who completes his plan.

Most of the Timorese children staying at New Hope come from the mission posts, mission churches, and their surrounding areas. From there the word spreads, so and so heard from so and so and you can well imagine people showing up at New Hope’s doorstep in this way.

Sumba

Currently we also have some children coming from the island of Sumba. Quite a ways away, and quite the amazing beginning of contact! We visited Sumba as a family in 2010. A bit of nostalgia for my husband who studied at the Reformed college in Waimarang for three years in the nineties. It was encouraging to meet with his former college friends, most of whom are now fellow ministers! During his time in Sumba he often visited “Marapu” (animist) villages where he became a welcome guest, made many friends, and was even given the opportunity to share the gospel. Wondering what had become of them, we decided to visit the village, which is about five kilometres from Waimarang.

Paganism

Amazingly the people still remembered him and welcomed us with open arms, inviting us up into their long house for some tea and snacks. The tribal leader at that time was over a hundred years old; the conversation was mainly between my husband and the tribal leader’s son.

As an “outsider” I just looked on and wondered how things would pack out from here for it seemed quite impossible for these people to give up their “adat” (beliefs). And sure enough, the son explained that when his father passes away, he will have to be the next priest and leader to continue the Marapu’s beliefs. The man was glad for our visit and told us that he had a son and daughter who both had finished grade twelve, and perhaps they would like to study the Bible. This conversation was continued through several phone calls, and eventually the man allowed his children to attend STAKRI, his son taking Theology while the daughter studied to become a teacher. Arrangements were made and Aran* and Emma* arrived in Kupang to begin their studies.

God’s grace

They studied the Bible with eagerness and fervour, followed catechism instruction, made profession of faith, and were baptized at the “Dalam Tuak Church” in Noelbaki. The Lord is good indeed! Who would have thought that a man so involved with pagan worship would allow his own son to study to be a minister? We are only tools in God’s hand, may his name be glorified!

Almost five years later, Aran has finished his courses and is currently writing his Thesis; he also teaches Catechism and leads Bible studies in the various mission posts/churches. His sister Emma took the religious teacher program and is also writing her Thesis at the moment; she is one of the volunteer counselors at New Hope.

Well, as so often happens, one thing leads to the next, and over the last five years of restored contact with Aran’s family, word has spread to other Marapu villages about the work of STAKRI and New Hope. It is so very exciting to see how the Lord works his plan, nothing is impossible with the Lord!

Refugees from East Timor

Now. . . I know you have been thinking about that one little word I mentioned before...abroad! Malaysia? Philippines? No, a little closer by, same island yet different country – East Timor! Formerly colonized by the Portuguese, then taken over by Indonesia, and finally declared independent in 1999. Throughout all this it was the Roman Catholic Church that reached out. In a matter of years the population changed from twenty percent to ninety-five percent of the people being Roman Catholic. Independency came with a great cost. Many lives were lost, a lot of anger and hatred grew and remained in the hearts of people for a long time. East Timorese refugees who sided with and fled to Indonesia had trouble integrating, felt disappointed and without prospects. The town of Noelbaki hosts one of the main refugee camps, situated right around the corner of the New Hope Home. There have been a number of clashes between the refugees and locals over the years, the locals feel that the refugees should move on, while the refugees themselves regret having lost all material wealth in East Timor and there is no way back since they voted against independency.

Elpida School

Our New Hope School (Elpida) is located right behind the refugee camp, unattached to former frictions and open to all who truly want to learn and conform to Elpida's principles, rules, and standards. Lydia,* an eleventh grade student at Elpida and originally from East Timor became friends with a couple of New Hope girls and got thinking about her relatives still living in East Timor who could not afford continued education for their children for economic reasons. The oldest boy, who was fourteen at the time, had dropped out of school and his younger sister just graduated from elementary school with no hopes and means to continue her high school education. Word came to them via their cousin Lydia about New Hope. Dad lost no time to make the long journey to Noelbaki with the request to have his children taken into the New Hope family.

Grace

After the interview and once all paperwork and necessary documents were signed and submitted it was agreed that the children could stay at New Hope with the understanding that they were willing to follow the teachings in the home, church, and school.

Maya* adapted fairly quickly to the new pace of life and the Reformed teachings. Tony,* on the other hand, clung to the Roman Catholic belief he had known for all his life; he continued to make the cross sign before and after prayer, and later we found out he held a small wooden

image of the virgin Mary in his cupboards along with his prayer beads. Many months passed, and Tony started to ask lots of questions. Following the catechism sermon we usually have a question period, and almost every week Tony would raise his hand, obviously something was stirring in his heart and mind. Just recently our children related to us a conversation they had had with Tony and Maya; they talked about the meaning of their names (Moses, taken from the water, Grace, a free gift from the Lord explained Grace herself) and Tony chimed in: "That is something you can't find in the Roman Catholic Church!" How wonderful to see the Holy Spirit at work in his young heart. He truly has come to see what the Bible is all about – grace! May it be a word that flows from our lips freely in all places and at all times.

Please pray for Tony and Maya and all other children that live here at New Hope that each and every one may come to confess that it is by grace they have been saved, may his Word be proclaimed!

*In Christ,
Femmy Dethan-Bouwman*

** names have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the children*

Prayer requests

Please pray for:

- The children sponsored by New Hope
- The counselors who care for the children in the dormitories
- The Dethans as they continue this work and prepare for their furlough
- The spreading of the gospel and the growth of strong Christians in Timor

Financial requests

- At this point in time we are still in need of sponsors-sponsor a child for \$50/month or make a one-time donation
- We are also requesting donations towards the Elpida school operational budget as well as the plans to build more class rooms in the school.

Anyone wishing to support New Hope please write all cheques out to "Smithville Canadian Reformed Church" earmarked "Mission Aid/New Hope" – Please postdate your cheques for January 1, 2016 if you wish to receive a tax receipt.

In Christ's service,
The Smithville Mission Aid Board
Smithville Canadian Reformed Church
330 Station Street, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0



Christ—Hope in Troubled Lands

The influx of refugees into Europe is quite complex. These are not only from war-torn Syria; some come from safe areas while others are Islamists devoted to the Islamic cause. The Lord knows and is surely using the loving witness of His people to overcome evil.

Yet, the suffering of families throughout the Arab world is overwhelming. In addition to the homeless fleeing IS militias in northern Iraq and Syria, in North Africa, Libya is still rocked by armed groups vying for power. From this chaos some take boats to Europe. But worse off are families in the poor western corner of the Arabian peninsula. Suddenly they are in great danger, with no place to flee.



Yemeni children seeking drinking water

Yemen

In recent years, an increasing number of Yemenis have been responding to Gospel radio by quietly abandoning Islam and embracing Christ. Suddenly their world is being shaken. Six months ago Yemen's neighbor, Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia, began aerial bombings of Yemeni Shiite Muslims. Now, half of the 27 million Yemenis have become food insecure and three quarters are without safe drinking water. Thousands of innocent

people have been killed or maimed. As fighting continues, radical Sunni Muslims affiliated with al-Qaida and IS are gaining territory. Pray especially for those who have found peace in Christ and for others attracted to the Gospel. Recent media ministry responses:

"Our situation in Yemen is very bad, our house was bombarded, I have 3 little kids with no water, no electricity, no food....we are trapped and we are not able to run away, please pray for us." (A. of Yemen—SMS text)

"I desire to know more about Christ, please can you help me?" (Kh. of Yemen—Facebook)

"I've been listening to your programs 3 months now and Christ has changed my heart. I am afraid of my family's reaction when they find out that I've become a follower of Christ, please pray for me." (W. of Saudi Arabia—SMS text)

Syria

Syria continues to be wracked by violence as zealous Islamists from all over the world strive to remove the secular government. Much suffering in Syria and Iraq has come at the hands of these violent Islamic militants, most of whom came through Turkey. In coordination with Turkey's Islamic government, the well-armed militias are supported by fanatical, oil-rich Sunni Muslim rulers, including sheikhs of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf States. All these Sunni Muslim states are longtime allies of the West. The West has also, more selectively, supported rebellion in Syria. The Islamic government of Turkey seems not only to enable the entry of fighters into Syria, but also



the crossing of thousands into Europe.

Refugee Aid

In Turkey the UN and aid organizations from around the globe help refugees. MERF only gives aid for the needs of Syrian and Iraqi refugees inside Syria, in neighboring Lebanon and Jordan, and a few in Cyprus through volunteers in faithful Arabic-speaking churches. Working through the Lebanon Reformed Fellowship and two committees inside Syria (Damascus and Aleppo), MERF diaconal aid is given with the ministry of the Word to the elderly, sick, and those who have lost homes and jobs. Lebanese and Syrian churches and Christian volunteers provide food parcels (preserved milk, meat, rice, and oil), medicines and medical supplies, transport to safer areas, house rent, and school books and fees.

Recently in Syria two evangelical church buildings were specifically targeted and bombed. Damages are only material and most remaining believers stay in shelters. Now that the new school year has begun, possible random bombing and snipers make commuting to school risky. A number of

new believers need constant Bible instruction and pastoral care, but few committed spiritual leaders remain; a steady stream departs the country.

In Lebanon authorities, fearing the infiltration of jihadists among Syrian refugees, have introduced harsh measures affecting several converted families. Pastors and others are working hard with political leaders to secure exemptions for about 22 families. Most Syrian refugees cared for by LRF and partner churches are of Christian background. Their numbers are growing. Currently the main financial burden is housing costs, but the lack of public health care in Lebanon also brings serious need.

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

Several small church groups ministering to refugees in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan have been strained by leadership disagreements over the use of material resources. Prayer is requested for a spirit of self-giving, humble service.

Syrian & Iraqi Gospel Responses

"The ongoing terrorist incidents in my country made me more convinced that the True God would never ask people to kill themselves and others for Him to be pleased. Only a false god would ask people to do so. It is through your broadcasts that I am learning more about the True God and I am finding true love and peace. I have also got a copy of The Old and New Testaments, and I would like to read books about Jesus [Issa]." (A. of Iraq—Skype)

"My mother and I used to listen to your programs on the radio daily in Syria for many years. We had to move to Turkey because of the war and I am glad to be able to listen to you again online." (I. of Syria—Skype)

"Please pray and fast for the situation in Syria and for the war to end." (F. of Syria—SMS)

Top: Matthew 8:11 in Arabic;
Left: Displaced Syrian mother on the run with her children

"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."
—Matthew 8:11