



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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West Timor – New Hope



A Prayer and a Plan. . .

It has been 13 years since our family set foot on Timor's soil to begin our task as missionaries. Preaching and teaching is what took up most of the initial days for my husband. The Lord has blessed this work enormously, beyond our expectations and plan. A total of seven mission posts and nine instituted churches have been established over the years. To shepherd and guide these congregations more man power was needed. God answered another prayer by allowing STAKRI (Reformed Theological Training Center) to be established and accredited.

The above summary might give you the impression that there were no obstacles, and everything just flowed along smoothly. Let me assure you this was/is definitely not the case! With the opening of each and every mission post/ church we met fierce opposition in many different ways, yes even to the point of feeling overwhelmed with it all, almost ready to give in to Satan's temptation to give up at times! The strength of prayer kept us and the congregations going. When we felt weak, we were made strong. The Lord gives perseverance!

Physical Needs

Besides the preaching and teaching, the Lord also opened our eyes to the physical needs in this Island and province. Children in need of a Christian home, education, food, and healthcare were and are an everyday reality. A plan was formed and through prayer it became a reality in the form of the New Hope Home. Hundreds of children have lived at New Hope over the last decade. They have been exposed to God's Word, lived in a Christian environment, graduated, and are now on to jobs, marriages, and establishing Christian families of their own. Satan of course would not let this go unhindered. He has been hard at work trying to disrupt, distract, and pull away. He has been successful in some cases or so it seems. We do not know what the Lord holds for the future. We continue to pray for

these children that the seed planted in their hearts may sprout, grow, and bear fruit. This year we have six Senior high school graduates. The big question on their minds right now is what to do next?

Henri

Over the years this very question has come up during our conversations with them, leading them to think and pray about the plan the Lord has for each of them in their lives. They juggled with options, college, university, work, back home to help the family. I am sure that you will agree that it is not an easy decision, and sometimes we prepare one way but the Lord leads us elsewhere, this is what happened to Henri*. Henri has been staying with us at New Hope since Junior High six years ago, a quiet, diligent and hardworking young man, strong in Science, a knack for English, and a love for the Lord. His dream is to go to university and study science, in order to become a teacher. Since New Hope at the moment does not have sponsorships for university students, the board has been looking into how we could possibly support him. This process was cut short by a visit of Henri's aged parents. Henri's father does not know how old he is exactly, but he does remember the Japanese taking occupancy! A little bit of math and you will get to about 70+! Henri is their only son. Not only that, he is also the only male among all cousins from Dad's side.

Before conversation started, we were presented with a "stack" of traditionally woven scarfs to "open the door." Etiquette prescribes that one cannot just waltz in and state business. It is also a way of showing their appreciation of what New Hope has done for Henri in the last six years. Since the parents don't speak the official Indonesian language, a translator helped us understand that father does not want Henri to continue his studies but come home and help on the family farm. In his opinion having obtained

a High School diploma is quite the accomplishment, a step ahead of most villagers. Time to come home and build up his own family and community. Although we understand the reasoning, we were surprised by this request and wondered what other reason there might be? After about half an hour of gentle probing the family made it clear that they are concerned with the growing trend of young men and women leaving the village to seek jobs and opportunities in Kalimantan and Malaysia. This is a growing concern for most rural areas. Young men especially leave and do not want to return to their hometowns. This is understandable, for life in the village is tough without electricity, running water and poor infrastructure. Instead Javanese migrants supported by Muslim political parties take the opportunity to settle into the village. Slowly but surely they are taking over leadership positions. For the last four years, Henri's village, Bila, has had a Muslim Mayor, who won over the people's vote by giving them handouts. Children are provided with scholarships at Muslim schools, families are given food packages when they convert to the Muslim faith. Thankfully families such as Henri's realize the danger in this movement, and are aware of the importance to prepare potential leaders. How can this be done?

1. The gospel should be preached and taught.
2. Children need to be educated.
3. Young people provided with the means to improve farming, learn a trade or set up business.

Looking ahead and preparing for the future, the family finds it important that Henri returns to the village. A complete change of plan for Henri. Disappointed? Yes, but he certainly feels that God is leading him this way, strengthened by this knowledge he is willing to go back to his home town and serve his people and his God right there. Please pray for him, as he goes about this task.

A good start is half the battle. . .

There is a time to come, and a time to go, graduates move on, and newcomers arrive both at the New Hope Home and at Elpida school. Busy times for the teachers and counselors! At the time of writing, we are into day number three of introduction week for Elpida! 25 girls and 36 boys signed up to participate in this two-day camping experience at "Hotel Saboak," otherwise known as the "Homestay." Girls camp finished yesterday. They left in high spirits, despite the lack of sleep! This morning the boys arrived with loads of energy, ready to take on two days filled with activities. Together with a team of STAKRI students and the Elpida teachers the program was put together with as theme: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Knowledge."*

The aim of this camp is to start the process of building up young men into Godly leaders and help young women to understand the role of being helpmeets. To accomplish this, it is important to get to know these boys and girls, build up trust and understanding.

Camp is a great opportunity to really get to know each other. Singing, devotions, and discussions draw us close,

encouraging one and other, praying with and for each other. Although most of the participants come from Christian homes, for some of them it is the first time to really spent time digging into God's Word, sharing their thoughts, questions, fears, and joys with others. It is wonderful to witness and be part of this bonding. We pray that these relationships will continue and deepen during their time at Elpida. Yes, education is important, but without fearing the Lord all that studying and gaining of knowledge is but vanity.

To get rid of the extra energy and build up team spirit, activities such as treasure hunts, soccer, quizzes, and swimming have proved very good time fillers! "Elpida's got Talent" is definitely a favourite. The last three standing get to sing live on air at Sahabat FM. The public is asked to submit their votes via SMS, the one with the most votes obviously winning the competition! So far we have received a very positive response from both the students and the parents. One girl said: "I was angry with my parents for signing me up for Elpida High School. I wanted to go to the public school where my best friend will be going. But after the first day at Camp I am so thankful to be part of Elpida and learn more about God."

During discussion this morning a boy shared the following: "Starting school at Elpida is a new start for me. Hanging out with the local street gang has landed me in jail last year. Ever since I have wanted to change, but it's hard to pull away from old friends. Through camp I'm making new friends who help and encourage me to turn back to the Lord."

We are thankful for the opportunity we have to reach out to these young people. It is encouraging to see the impact this has in their lives.

Though we haven't exactly moved a mountain, and if we think of the vast population of some 260 million Indonesia counts, our work seems very miniscule indeed. However, this does not stop us from praying and planning. Please pray and plan with us, for bringing Reformation to Indonesia.

*Blessings,
Femmy Dethan-Bouwman*

Prayer Requests:

- The Children sponsored by New Hope
- The Counsellors who care for the children in the dormitories
- The Dethans as they continue this work of Mission and Mission Aid
- The spreading of the gospel and the growth of strong Christians in Timor
- The Mission board and Mission Aid board as they examine different options for the future
- The wings to work trip planned for November and their fundraising plans

In Christ's service, the Smithville Mission Aid Board

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METF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"

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Ready for Freedom!



Recording a gospel message addressed to Muslim women

TV, and a growing number are literate enough to use smartphones and surf the Internet. So the mullahs, oppressive rulers, and family members can no longer keep the lid on the thinking and questioning of women, even in closed societies. For example, in the extremely locked-down country of Saudi Arabia, women are daring to express their quest for freedoms—like being allowed to drive a car and go shopping on their own.

Sin and Grace

METF staff interact daily with Muslim friends on social media. This is very helpful in preparing audio recordings presenting the Gospel to urbanized Arab women. Issues discussed include polygamy, emotional, psychological, physical, and even sexual abuse of women by fathers, brothers, and husbands. Subjects like unjust marriage, divorce, and inheritance laws are also addressed. We are blessed by so many opportunities to present God's own satisfying and sufficient answer in Christ.

For example, a recent Dardasha 7 radio episode

Yes, Muslim women are ready for freedom. This is not about Western world feminism. It is far more basic. It is longing to be treated as human beings. Oppression of women is codified in Muslim "Shari'a Law." Koranic teachings and well-honored, deeply ingrained traditions at best treat women as perpetual children and at worst as personal property. The Koran allows a man to marry up to four women or girls as young as nine years of age, treated equally. He ends a marriage at his whim by three pronouncements of: "I divorce you." A husband is enjoined to

beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his little finger! As a legal witness or heir of property, a woman is considered half a man. In many rural and urban Muslim communities, a woman without a male escort or traditional covering is fair target for serious abuse.

Muslim Women Rebel

Muslim women from as far east as Indonesia and as far west as Morocco are leading a rebellion in urban areas. Urban Muslim women are exposed to different ideas and lifestyles. More of them can read and write or

receive higher education than their sisters in rural areas. Uneducated Muslim women generally grow up believing that what Shari'a law dictates is best for them. Yet, even these have educated female relatives and can listen to the radio, watch



dealt with the rebellion of wives against oppressive husbands. As always, it is written with the purpose of presenting the bad news—manifested in the symptoms of sin—followed by the good news of God's saving grace in Christ. This is the objective of all our productions.

This episode included a dramatized segment of the real-life story of a man, given the name Maarouf, who was blessed by a very loving wife, Soaad. He much enjoyed her many admirable qualities for 28 years of married life. She even earned almost as much money as he did from her teaching job. Then Soaad contracted cancer which required expensive treatment. At the urging of his male friends, Marouf decided not to spend his resources on expensive cancer treatments for his wife Soaad, but rather to use the money to get another wife to satisfy his manly needs.

The episode was first broadcast live online and allowed for interactive participation of listeners. Here are two sample reactions:

"...the problem is that we women are contented to be religiously treated as dispos-



able instruments and tools"

"I fully agree and feel ashamed as a man to think that our religion would allow such degrading and selfish behavior..."

This Arabic audio episode ended by pointing to Christ's teaching that in marriage man and woman become an indivisible one body.

In God's Image

Fatima Na'outh, a prominent Egyptian journalist active in opposing Shari'a laws related to the treatment of women, has recently been sentenced to prison. She was accused by

Islamists of belittling Islam and instigating rebellion against religious norms. The court was headed by an Islamist judge. Na'outh appealed the sentence, saying, *"my imprisonment is the seed of women freedom!"* It is probably not by coincidence that this echoes a historic Christian saying: "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church."

She goes on to say: *"...the God I know is a truly good God... He is far better than they want us to think. And He wants women to be liberated and dignified because they are also created in His*

own image, just like men..." She has been receiving strong support from women and men across Arab and Muslim lands.

Fatima is well-known for her public quotes of Christ's sayings in her online blogs, newspaper and magazine articles, and in interviews with TV and radio journalists. Speaking at a Christian gathering in Alexandria, Egypt, she was asked why she, a Muslim woman, promotes Jesus' teaching so much. Her answer was unambiguous: *"...who else truly speaks such profound and liberating truths!"*

Top: Brainstorming about reaching Muslim women; **Bottom:** Driving illegally with thumb up



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"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."
—John 8:36