

Outlook

FIRST QUARTER 2013 • SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

Timor Leste: The Growth of the Gospel in a New Nation



02

Outlook

FIRST QUARTER 2013

EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR – Jonathan Catolico
EDITOR – Teresa Costello
ASSOCIATE EDITOR – Romhelyn Gay Deles
GRAPHIC DESIGNER – Gerson Lopez
LAYOUT – Print4Less Printshop
PRINTER – Philippine Publishing House

CORRESPONDENTS

Benjamin Raksham (Bangladesh)
Donald Zabala (Central Philippines)
Stephen Salainti (East Indonesia)
Myo Chan (Myanmar)
Jose Orbe, Jr. (North Philippines)
Samuel Nazir (Pakistan)
Simon Siew (Southeast Asia)
Nelson Paulo (South Philippines)
Nedra Perera (Sri Lanka)
Wesley Szamko (Timor Leste)
Samuel Simorangkir (West Indonesia)

SSD DIRECTORY

Alberto Gulfan Jr. – President
Johnny Lubis – Vice President
Saw Samuel – Executive Secretary
Sergie Ferrer – Treasurer
Moldy Mambu – Undertreasurer
Kevin Costello – Associate Treasurer/Associate Secretary/AVS
Jacinth Adap – Associate Treasurer
Rex Rosas – Human Resource/Legal Services
Ernesto Douglas Venn – Adventist Mission/Urban Mission
Houtman Sinaga – Ministerial/ACM
Wendell Mandolang – Stewardship/Trust Service/Philanthropic
Hermogenes Villanueva – Sabbath School and Personal Ministry
Jonathan Catolico – Communication/PARL/Hope Channel/AWR
Miriam Andres – Family Life/Children's Ministries
Helen Gulfan – Women's Ministries/Shepherdess International
Jobbie Yabut – Youth Ministries/AMICUS
Vivencio Bermudez – Publishing Ministries/SOP
Abraham Carpena – Health Ministries
Lawrence Domingo – Education
Danny Rantung – Associate Education/NSO
Rufo Gasapo – Adventist Health Care
Mickey Bankhead – I.T. Services

To Writers and Contributors: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts and letters to the editor. (Please inquire before submitting long articles.) Include address and telephone number. Address all correspondence to:

OUTLOOK, Southern Asia-Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventists
Bypass Road, Aguinaldo Highway, 4118 Silang, Cavite, PHILIPPINES
Phone +63 (46) 4144.4000 Fax +63 (46) 414.4001
Letters to the editors: jcatolico@ssd.org | tcostello@ssd.org
Submit articles: outlook@ssd.org





what's inside

01 DEPARTMENTS

- 04 New Year, New Growth
- 06 Timor-Leste
- 18 TREASURE CHEST – The Gift of Life
- 19 YOUTH LINK – Mariano’s Story
- 20 YOUTH LINK – Lola’s Story
- 21 RECIPE – Batar Daan
- 22 DEVOTIONAL – Complete Closure to the Past

02 FIELD NEWS

- 08 Media Ministry Learn New Skills
- 08 World Vice President Promotes Hope Project in Bali
- 10 SPAC Chorale Earns National Arts Month Choir Competition
- 10 Women of Sarawak come Together for Prayer
- 11 Sharing the Vision of SDA
- 12 Inauguration of Munson Memorial Church
- 13 Media Workshop Held in Davao, Philippines

03 FEATURES

- 14 A Healed Heart
- 15 The Stones Fly Softer
- 16 A Morning Call
- 16 East Timor Missionary Association
- 17 ADRA Timor-Leste’s First Project

03



New year, new growth

Here in the Philippines, we're enjoying the end to the cooler, rainy season and seeing the start of the summery dry season. It's the time of year when a family friend who loves to garden begins to clear out his plot and plant the seedlings he's been growing. Ask him about all the trouble he is going through with monster weeds and depleted soil and pesky bugs, and he'll acknowledge it all with a nod and slow smile. Then he'll say something like, "But I won't be thinking about all that when I'm enjoying a good meal." We're seeing the struggles of here and now, and he is seeing the rewards of the future.

This was brought to mind while editing this issue of Outlook. We're featuring the small but hardy Democratic Republic of Timor or Timor-Leste as it is commonly known. Most recent statistics place the population at just over one million for the 15,410 km² (5,400 sq miles) nation.

Approximately 1/3 of the population does not have access to safe drinking water thus leading to numerous health issues. Reportedly, 49.9% of the people live below the national poverty line of \$.88/day. In terms of education, there is a strong showing in elementary school but this declines in the later years with only 34% of males and 39% of females enrolled in secondary school.

Rather than despairing over these statistics, Adventist workers in Timor-Leste view conditions there as opportunities to share the life-giving message of Jesus with people in emotional, physical and spiritual need. Through well-developed Adventist ministries in the areas of health, education and development & relief, the Adventist church is offering practical programs to meet pressing local needs. In this issue, you'll read of the situations in which health ministry ranging from the compassion and tireless work of trained medical personnel to seemingly simple programs such as hygiene lessons in local schools is changing hearts and lives. Some of the stories might bring tears to your eyes; others will prompt you to think about the blessings in your life. And still others will inspire you to look around and see what you can do in your area.

You'll also learn about the urgent need for Adventist education in Timor-Leste so our young people won't have to face discrimination and in many cases persecution not only from classmates but from teachers and





EDITORIAL

administration. Read the inspiring stories in YouthLink to realize the difficult situations that our young people face there. Although there currently exists a spiritual training center for older youth and adults, workers in Timor-Leste dream of one day having a solid Adventist educational system. The addition of a first-grade program to the already existing kindergarten one is the next step toward the dream. One day, hopefully not too far into the future, we will celebrate with Timor-Leste educators when they have their first elementary and secondary graduates.

Finally, you'll discover anew the difference something as basic as clean water can make as noted in the Treasure Chest story this month. The work of ADRA Timor-Leste is revitalizing villages through its clean water campaign. It is ministry in its most practical and necessary form. When ADRA goes into villages, their presence and unselfish work touch the hearts of the people so that the gospel can be then shared as evidenced in *The Stones Fly Softer* from our *Stories of Inspiration* section.

Regardless of which article touches your heart the most, I pray that the Holy Spirit will prompt you to take a closer look at the faithfulness of our brothers and sisters there in Timor-Leste, and that you will include them and their needs in your personal and corporate prayers. Share some of the stories during your family worship or in a Sabbath School class. Why? Because we all need to recognize growth at times. We need to see how God is growing His work in other places and in the lives of other people because then we can look at our lives and see His work in our hearts. We need that encouragement and those reminders when we cannot see the end result, when our life circumstances tell us that there is no hope or good solution. When we see the barrenness of our lives or the tangled weeds of damaging decisions and mistakes in us, we need to know that we can turn to the Master Gardener who will patiently, day-by-day, clear out the past and create new growth in us.



“ But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit. ”

(Jeremiah 17:7-8) — BY TERESA COSTELLO

05

Timor~ Leste

Timor-Leste (formerly known as East Timor) is a country with a long history of political strife. During the 450 years of colonial rule under Portugal, there was a strong undercurrent of people desiring independence. It seemed that this would become a reality when the colonial rule of Portugal ended in 1975. However, after gaining independence from Portugal, East Timor was almost immediately invaded by Indonesia.

Sources claim that during Indonesian rule somewhere between 100,000-250,000 people were killed. After regaining independence in 1999, militia favorable to Indonesia burned down the capital of Dili and destroyed most of the country's infrastructure, leaving 300,000 people as refugees. The United Nations has had a strong presence in Timor-Leste from that time until recently, during which the country had a near civil war in 2006 and an assassination attempt on the president in 2008. Things are stabilizing now and

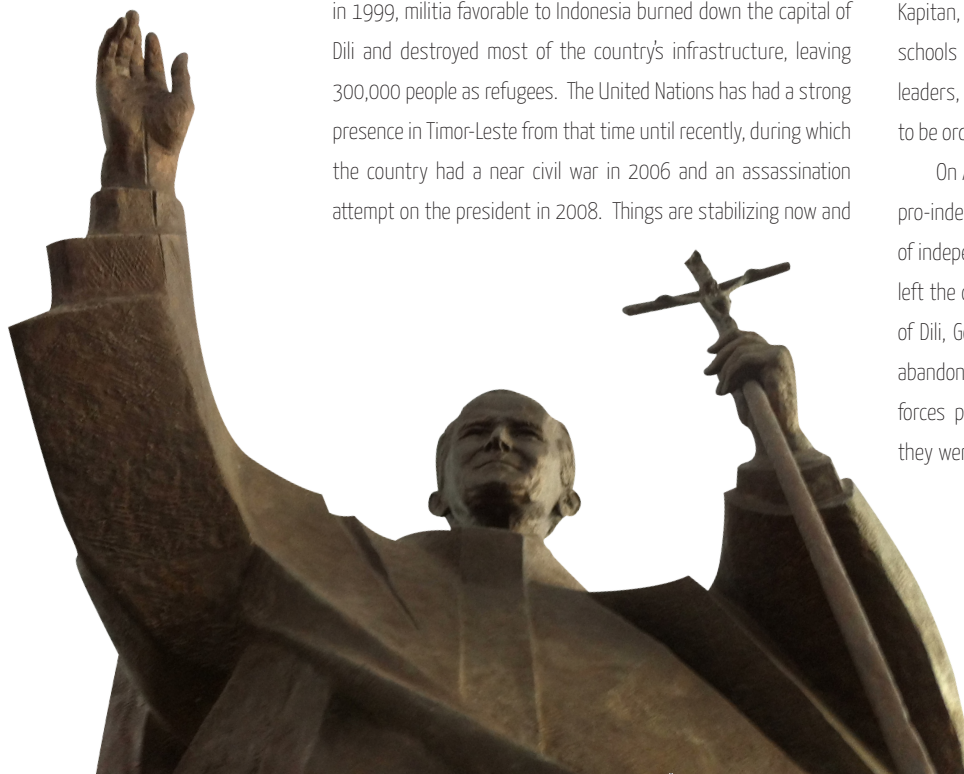


the UN officially ended its integrated mission in December of 2012. So far things have been peaceful.

The Seventh-day Adventist church began its work in the early 1970s. Pastor Larry Colburn, former General Conference Adventist Mission director, remembers sending a group from Indonesia to investigate the possibility of sending Literature Evangelists to Dili around 1972. A few years later, literature evangelists entered the country and the work began. In 1986, a small company of eight members was organized under the Nusa Tenggara Mission by Pastor Martaatmaja and obtained permission to worship in the barracks of the Indonesian Police.

The first Adventist church in Timor-Leste was built in 1992 and inaugurated in 1993 by Pastor Alex Hendrik of the Nusa Tenggara Mission. The church began to grow. Around the same time, an Adventist police official and instrumental church pioneer, Paulus Kapitan, had a vision of sending young people to the Adventist schools in Indonesia. This helped to provide future Timorese leaders, including Pastor Inaciu da Costa, the first Timorese pastor to be ordained in Timor-Leste.

On August 30, 1999 opinion polls were held and won by the pro-independence movement. During the time of the restoration of independence in Timor-Leste, all but a handful of the members left the country due to the unrest. During the 1999 destruction of Dili, God protected His church in Dili even though it had been abandoned. Stories are told of how Adventists in the Indonesian forces protected our church in Dili from being burned. When they were forced to leave, Adventists with the UN forces took up





FEATURED COUNTRY OVERVIEW

protection of our church. God's ways are truly amazing.

Since 1999, the membership has grown to where it is now--close to 500 people. Timor-Leste was organized as a Field in 2009 and as a Mission in September of 2011 and is directly attached to the Southern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Statistically, the country is 98% Catholic. Predominantly, the careful observer will see that ancestor worship, spirit worship and animism is still very strong. Our members in Timor-Leste face regular difficulties when they choose to become Adventists, including rejection and persecution from their family, loss of a job or pension, threats of physical violence, destruction of property, stoning of our churches and public meetings, and occasional physical violence. You can help us by praying for the following things:

1 GOD'S WISDOM, PROTECTION AND DIRECTION THROUGH HIS HOLY SPIRIT AS WE TRY TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS AND HIS SOON RETURN;

2 GOD'S HELP WITH OUR PLANS THIS YEAR TO RESTART OUR RADIO STATION, START A MEDICAL CLINIC, AND ADD GRADE ONE TO OUR KINDERGARTEN AS WE GRADUALLY BUILD AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,

3 GOD'S HELP IN FINDING SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST WITH THE WORK WHILE WE TRAIN LOCAL PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE. VOLUNTEER POSITIONS CAN BE SEEN AT WWW.ADVENTISTVOLUNTEERS.ORG BY CLICKING "LONG TERM", SEARCHING THE CALLS, AND REFINING THE CALLS BY THE CALLING COUNTRY OF EAST TIMOR.



07



Media Ministry learn new skills

Amidst impending bad weather due to low-pressure area (LPA) affecting the island of Mindanao, 44 participants from the Adventist Churches in Mati City and suburbs arrived in high spirits, to attend the first Media Volunteers Workshop, January 3 and 4, at the Globesite Adventist Church, Barangay Dahican, Mati City.

The participants joyfully role-played as radio hosts and reporters before each of them were put live on air at DXME 94.3 FM, a Seventh-day Adventist Church-operated station in Mati City.

"I didn't know it was that scary to answer very simple questions from the radio host," says Jimjinel Ortiz, a 14-year old participant, who came along with his father, James.

"I love this workshop! It makes me yearn more for trainings to help us know better of our responsibilities as church members and partners in the media ministry of the Church," confessed Elpidio Ul-

gasan, a participant who also has an eighth-month old program in another radio station.

Mr. Rhoen P. Catolico, manager of the Adventist Media Center – Davao, made the workshop very much alive as participants were asked to produce a script and recording output for the topic on Fundamentals of Audio Production, on January 3. The following day, January 4, was spent on how to gather data for news reporting and participants were asked to role-play as hosts and reporters.

"I normally leave all the talking and public relations to our local church officers and elders," said Japhet Plenos who makes a living by driving a motorized vehicle. "I did not regret having asked my employer to miss working for two days to come to this workshop. This training has made me realized that as a church member, I carry a big responsibility to let the people know why and how we, as a church exists. I enjoyed doing the recording, mixing, and on-the-spot reporting!"

World Vice President

On January 30, Adventist church world vice president, Dr. Delbert Baker, made his first stop in Bali, Indonesia as part of a world tour series to meet the island's church members and promote the importance of the reading and distribution of *The Great Controversy* (re-titled *The Great Hope*).

It was a rare opportunity for the Denpasar Adventist Church congregation to be visited by a world church vice president. Despite the heavy downpour that evening, a hundred enthusiastic members listened to Pastor Baker speak on Psalm 69:9 regarding the zeal for God that enables people to do great things as a result of

World church vice president, Dr. Delbert Baker, stands among leaders of the Adventist church in west Indonesia to promote *The Great Hope* book. He first stopped in Bali during a world tour to promote reading and distribution of the literature.

– photo by BRUCE SUMENDAP





FIELD NEWS

In his commitment message, Catolico said, **“Our job is not just about getting on board and talk in front of the microphone and when the program is over, that’s about it! Our job is to create connections with the community, establish the bridge of hope, and proclaim God’s saving grace!”**

“Make yourself available at all times, and you will see God’s marvelous ways working in you,” he challenged.

The event ended with everyone having their names on the volunteer list trying to get a spot to assist in the broadcast schedule of the station.

Adventist Media Center – Davao, is the official media arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Davao, which oversees productions for Hope Channel, Hope Radio, Print Productions, and Web Ministry.

– BY CANDY G. JAVILLES



Rhoen P Catolico, manager of the Adventist Media Center for the church in Davao, livens up the crowd with his topic on Audio Production during a media ministry seminar in Mati City on January 3-4

~ photos provided by the Adventist Medical Center, Davao

Promotes Hope Project in Bali

a life devoted to Him.

Baker’s encouraging stories and reports from around the world fueled a sense of revival and reformation among the listeners. Baker also conveyed greetings from Pastor Ted Wilson, world church president, who cast the vision for the Tell The World five-year theme in 2010 with additional promotion from 2012 to 2013. Baker then shared a video of other world church leaders commenting on the importance of sharing The Great Hope to people of different backgrounds.

Dr. Baker challenged the church pastor, Budi Solihin, to raise \$500 dollars to match another \$500 from a donor to print 2,000 copies of the literature in the local language and share it with people throughout the island. To Baker’s amazement, the local pastor and congregation accepted the challenge with a loud ‘Amen!’

Everyone was thrilled and encouraged as they were reminded that they were a part of a worldwide family where every member and congregation is important.

Toward the end of the meeting, Pastor Baker asked everyone to head to the stage for a special prayer, each with a copy of Kemenangan Akhir, the Indonesian version of The Great Hope. The church members also offered a special prayer for Dr. Baker as he proceeded on to the nine other stops on the tour.

Bali is a province in Indonesia with a population of 3.8 million. Widely regarded as a tourist haven for decades, the island is known for its natural wonders and highly developed arts. In Bali, more than 92 percent of the population adheres to the religion of Balinese Hinduism, the rest are followers of Islam. Denpasar is the capital city of Bali with more than 800,000 residents. The earliest Seventh-day Adventist

church here began in the 1960’s and remains the only congregation of Sabbath-keepers. Today, there are seven Adventist churches in Bali. Most of the church members work in tourism. Even with the rapid growth of church membership in the past decade, evangelism among Hindus remains challenging. For this reason, it is important to find new ways to reach the unreached millions here.

– BY BRUCE SUMENDAP

09



SPAC Chorale Earns National Arts Month Choir Competition

The South Philippine Adventist College (SPAC) Chorale directed by Mr. Monroe Ortizano captured the top honor in a February “Harana sa Abreeza” singing festival during National Arts month at the Abreeza Mall of Davao, Philippines.

Each choir was required to sing three songs within 15 minutes: one Original Pilipino Music (OPM) song, one folksong/ethnic piece of their own choice and the contest piece “PusongBato” which was arranged by Mr. Arnel De Pano.

The SPAC Chorale was entry number 4 among nine entries including the Holy Child Balyok Choir, UM Digos Chorale, Denians Voice Ensemble, Koro Azul, South Cotabato Chorale, John Paul II College Chorale, Saint Mary’s College Chorale and Vox Amigos.

Three experts in various musical fields comprised the judges panel. The first judge was Ms. Vicky Villarino, a former member of the 1986 UP concert chorus. The next judge Mr. Arnel De Pano, was the resident judge of the MBC National Chorale Competition and the arranger of the contest piece. The third judge was Mr. Alvin Bong Aviola, the conductor of the Himig Singers, a well-known local group, and one of the owners of MUSIKADEMY.

During the contest, each of the choirs gave their all and provided wonderfully choreographed songs that entertained and delighted the audience. SPACians, both past and present, were in the audience, to show their robust support. When the final results were tallied and SPAC was announced as the winner, one commenter said that the victory of entry number 4 was not unexpected because “the

FIELD NEWS

Women of Sarawak come together for prayer

This year, the program was sponsored by the Adventist women in Kuching. Chai Sew Moi, women’s ministries leader for the Adventist church territory in Southeast Asia, invited keynote speaker Mercy Ferrer, motivational speaker and a staff member from the church headquarters in the southern Asia-pacific region (SSD) located in the Philippines.

The Friday evening meeting was held at the Batu Kawa SDA Church in Kuching. The evening started with approximately 200 women sharing a potluck dinner followed by a vespers service.

The highlight of the weekend was the outreach program and an overnight stay at the Iban Longhouse in Jualu, Sibiu. Early Saturday morning thirteen buses of eager attendees left Kuching for a seven-hour drive to Jualu. Upon

arrival, the ladies were assigned to the different homes and one can feel the excitement in the air as they made new friends and learned from each other. The evening began with a devotional message and prayers followed by cultural presentations from the different groups. The most memorable moment was when the Iban hosts taught their guests how to do the traditional dance accompanied by a gong musical instrument.

When asked about their experience from the trip, it was obvious that the ladies had a wonderful time. Hellen Ling (SDA), 2013 ACS chairperson, proudly mentioned, **“The ladies from other churches are impressed with how we SDA leaders organized the event. They especially love the messages and I can see them taking down notes.”**

The warm fellowship was also noticed. “The five of us feel so welcome and are already like part of Sarawak family,” remarked Rechel Gonsung from Sabah.

Indeed, it is an experience that many women will remember for a lifetime. One can truly say, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” Psalm 133:1. — BY JULIA DAIBANI & SAMUEL SIMORANGKIR

— photo by Mercy Ferrer



“I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me”, was the theme of the International Day of Prayer, March 1 and 2, attended by approximately 780 women from Kuching, Sarawak, including five ladies from Sabah. The event was sponsored by the Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS), a group of different protestant denominations – Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army, Methodist, SidangIngil Borneo (Evangelical), and Seventh-day Adventist. These women came together for a weekend of prayer and Christian fellowship.

“World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who welcome all to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday of March. It is an ecumenical movement that brings together women of various races, cultures, and traditions in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year.” 1



music that they sang is very balanced and the voice quality sophisticated. It is like the many other professional groups that win contests like the Harana sa Abreeza.” The group received a trophy and a cash prize.

Afterward, the members of the choir acknowledged

that their thorough practice and rehearsals really paid off. The teary eyed director led the group in prayer and thanksgiving for the wonderful opportunity given them to represent their school and church.

— BY JEGUIEN JEON NIETES

Sharing the Vision of SDA

11

“ It is a privilege for us to share the vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is to help people...as well as to listen to His Excellency the President of Indonesia on his vision for this country to help people, creating jobs, expanding education and eliminate poverty within the country,” stated Elder Ted Wilson, president of the Adventist world church during a press conference following his February 12, 2013 meeting with H. E Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia.

During the 30 minute presidential audience, President Yudhoyono acknowledged the presence and involvement of the SDA Church as well as his support for Religious Freedom in Indonesia. During the meeting Elder Wilson expressed his gratitude to President Yudhoyono for the support that the government has given to the church in the past and then offered to share words of encouragement from the book of Micah. He shared that Micah advises leaders to never make any judgment based on their own understanding but to turn to God who is the source of all wisdom. Secondly, a leader needs to make right and just decisions so that the people will give their

support willingly. Finally, a leader must have compassion and care for his people. The response from President Yudhoyono was positive. He said that these were exactly his hopes for the people of Indonesia so that the country will grow and the people will support each other. By doing so, there will be tolerance between religious group and thus Indonesia will continue to thrive and be prosperous.

At the end of the meeting, Elder Wilson offered to pray for President Yudhoyono and Indonesia. To everyone’s delight, President Yudhoyono, a devout Moslem, graciously accepted the offer. Thus, Elder Wilson prayed for the President, his wife, his family, his administration, Indonesia and its people. After the prayer ended, President Yudhoyono gave his sincere appreciation to Elder Wilson for his prayer.

A press conference held by Hope Channel Indonesia and WIUM/Conference Media Center followed the meeting. Regarding his presidential audience, Elder Wilson commented that “anytime that we can talk about The Lord in season or out of season, whatever we can speak about the Lord, ultimately, it will have a positive impact. Therefore, this is the opportunity now for the church to re-engage in a more stronger way in helping communities and helping people

to understand their true value and to introduce them to our Wonderful Master, Jesus Christ who is soon to come and His longing to reach the heart of millions of people, not only in Indonesia but around the world. It is the privilege of the SDA church to be a part of that movement.”

— BY JULIA DAIMBANI & SAMUEL SIMORANGKIR



outlook | First Quarter 2013



FIELD NEWS

“The church must not only be very active--it should be interactive,” said Rhoen P. Catolico, manager of the Adventist Media - Davao as he welcomed 72 participants from around Mindanao to the newswriting, photojournalism, and TV production workshop, dubbed The Interactive Church, on March 3 to 5, 2013 at the Adventist Church headquarters in Davao.

The workshop targeted Communication directors, publication staff, public relations and marketing staff from Adventist institutions. Catolico noted that the workshop's primary aim was to Equip, Enhance and Enrich. He explained, “This event is to equip our institutional communication and public relations leaders and enhance their ministry thereby enriching the lives of everyone through this ministry.”

Dr. Jonathan Catolico, the Communication/Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director of the Adventist Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD), was the keynote speaker for the event. Pastor Nelson Paulo, communication/PARL director of the Adventist Church in Mindanao (SPUC), attended in support of the event.

Resource persons include Henrylito Tacio, the main presenter of the newswriting workshop, or as he calls it, the “writeshop.” He is a science journalist who specializes in agriculture, environment, technology, and related subjects. He is currently working as an information specialist for the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation. He also writes for local, national and international publications. He

Inauguration Of Munson Memorial Church

PADANG--At least 300 people gathered on March 7, 2013 to dedicate and celebrate the new Munson Memorial Church in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The dedication ceremony was full of high-lights that emphasized the mission and pioneering spirit of the Munson family who established the first Adventist congregation here 113 years ago.

The name ‘Munson Memorial Church’ is in honor of the Adventist pioneer missionary, Ralph Waldo Munson, who arrived in this coastal city in 1899 with his family to start evangelistic work by opening an English school for the Chinese community here.

Pastor Joseph S. Peranganing, President of West Indonesia Union Mission reminded the gatherers that the new house of worship should be a house of ‘joy and delight.’

“The Lord will bring healing and comfort to those who seek Him in this holy place,” he said, citing the Biblical passages of Psalm 43:3-4. This timely message reflects on the history behind the rebuilding of this new structure. As a result of the massive earthquake that hit the city of Padang in 2006, the original church building was greatly affected. It took some time and a 15-month process to reach the inauguration day.

Sendra Gunawan, a businessman and philanthropist who was also chairman of the building committee reported that the original plan was to start building a new church in 1999 after the centennial anniversary of the Adventist message in the country. But it was not until 2011 that the groundbreaking took place.

“God’s timing is always right,” says Gunawan who was joined by brothers Anton and Ronald Marbun, young business entrepreneurs who also provided funding resources for this church building.



Media Workshop Held in Davao, Philippines

is the secretary of the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists, Inc.

Mr. John Quineth Rodriguez, a photographer for the Sun Star Davao, taught the photojournalism session. He has conducted workshops in photojournalism and has earned numerous recognitions for his work from the Philippine Press Institute. He serves as Board of Trustee of Davao Sportswriters Association.

Mr. Johnster Joe Calibod and Ms. Jade Yero-Soreño, Hope Channel Cagayan de Oro video editor and scriptwriter, respectively, came to complete the workshop with the ins and outs of TV production. One of the highlights of the event was the organization and election of the Mindanao Adven-

tist Communicators. Those elected include:

President - Rhoen P Catolico, Manager, Adventist Media, Davao Mission VP (Davao) Filomeno Delgado, director, Communication/PARL, Davao Mission VP (Northern Mindanao) - Ephraim Pitogo, district pastor/Manager, DXBP-FM, North Central Mindanao Conference VP (Northeastern Mindanao) - Meljoie Pepito, web administration, Northeastern Mindanao Mission VP (Southern Mindanao) - Nuelin Sanes, treasurer, Southern Mindanao Mission VP (Western Mindanao) - Segundino Asoy, Executive Secretary/director, Communication/PARL, Western Mindanao Conference VP (Zamboanga) - Ronald Hazel Ramos, treasurer, Zamboanga Peninsula Mission Secretary - Bjezrel Labajo, instructor,

Northeastern Mindanao Academy Treasurer - Vic June Francisco, Chief Finance Officer, MSH College Public Information Officer - Jomar Pascua, Assoc. Professor, South Philippine Adventist College

Dr. Jonathan Catolico and Pastor Nelson Paulo will serve as consultants to the group.

- BY BJEZREL LABAJO

During his remarks, Central Sumatra Mission President, Pastor Limbong, noted that the Adventist community is growing stronger in faith and unity here. "Every time we look at this church, we are reminded of our mission, to spread the love of God to people around us," said Pastor Limbong.

As a reminder of the legacy left by previous workers and members and to encourage current members to be mission-minded, West Indonesia Union Executive Secretary, Pastor Johnny Rantung, son of church pioneer Samuel Rantung, recounted some childhood memories and noted that those years were 'very sad.'

"I entered this place last night weeping," says Pastor Rantung, "I remember my father being beaten and accused of being spying for the colonizers when in fact he was giving Bible studies."

Rantung senior, after being baptized by Munson in the early 1900s, brought the 'three angels message' to Java Island and North Sulawesi, where the work there continues to flourish today.

Next, Padang city Mayor, Fauzi Bahar who gave remarks and signed the inauguration plate expressed his excitement regarding this historic day and pledged to further assist the Adventist members here to 'build better a community in Padang.'

The ribbon cutting ceremony was followed by the building tour led by church pastor, Rahmat Nduru.

The following Sabbath, members and guests worshipped in the new sanctuary and were inspired by Pastor Peranginangin's Ephesians 5:25 sermon urging members to 'love one another.'

Strategically located by the busy coastal road of West Sumatra, the colonial-style building has huge stained-glass windows, accented pillars and can seat up to 80 worshippers.

- BY SAMUEL SIMORANGKIR & BRUCE SUMENDAP

13



A Healed Heart

STORIES OF INSPIRATION

“I don’t want your help and I don’t want your prayers. Leave my house,” he spat out at Ivonne, a doctor. She looked down at the desperately ill man, Pedro*, lying in front of her. Then she looked over at the man’s sister, Lita*. Years ago, Lita had accepted Jesus as her personal Savior and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When Pedro found out, he was enraged. He furiously beat Lita with the intention of killing her. Lita escaped, but her brother’s hatred remained. Now, here he was, a young man in his thirties with a body bloated from excess fluid as he suffered through the late stages of heart failure. His heart was also steadfastly set against the Holy Spirit. Sadly, Ivonne and Lita left Pedro to his suffering. When home, we all prayed that God would save Pedro, physically and spiritually.

A month passed when a call came from Lita. “Ivonne, I need your help,” she cried. Arriving at Pedro’s aging cement block and tin roofed house, Ivonne found Lita trying desperately to care for an angry and suffering Pedro. His 13-year-old son had run away to escape the tumultuous home, leaving the bed-ridden man with no care and no food. Lita stopped everything else to come to her former persecutor’s aid. This time, Pedro cautiously accepted help.

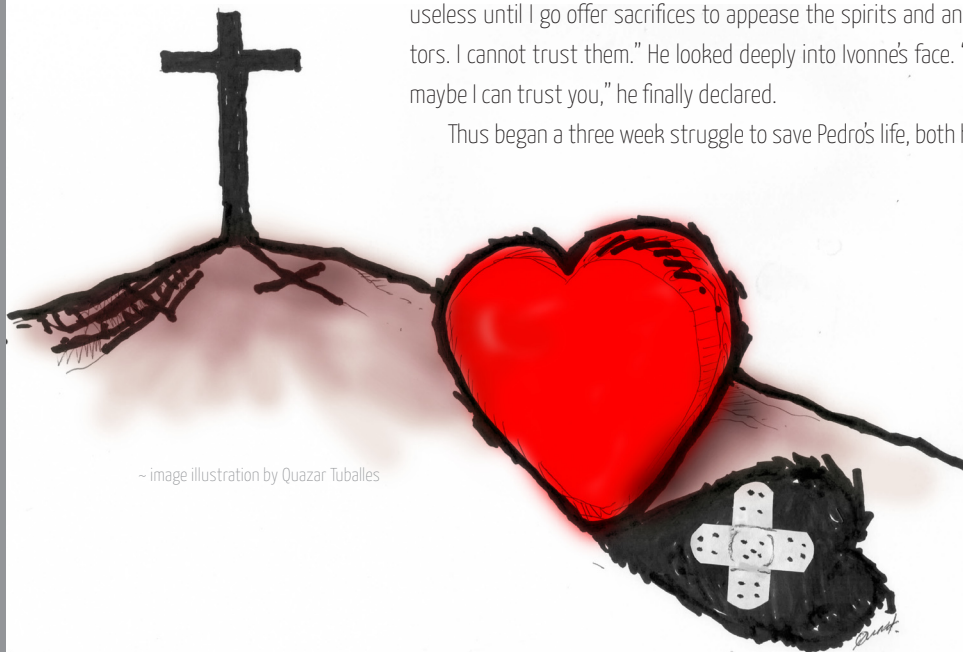
He refused to go to the hospital and was very suspicious. “I don’t want anyone doing magic on me,” he blurted out. “The doctors in the hospital—even the foreign ones— they say the pills they give are useless until I go offer sacrifices to appease the spirits and ancestors. I cannot trust them.” He looked deeply into Ivonne’s face. “But maybe I can trust you,” he finally declared.

Thus began a three week struggle to save Pedro’s life, both here

and for eternity. He began to accept prayer and listen to Bible promises. His frightful condition worsened and he was hospitalized. Crying out in pain, Pedro lay on the floor in a ward in the dismal conditions common on island, even in Timor-Leste’s best hospital.

After Ivonne’s struggle to get his case considered, a visiting heart surgeon examined Pedro. “It is too late,” he said. “It has been too long with too much damage. I don’t know any surgeon who would even attempt surgery. It is such a shame—he is so young. I’m sorry.” With tears, Ivonne shared the news with Pedro. As Ivonne later left the hospital, Lita told her something Pedro said: “I have never met a doctor who has cared for me with so much kindness. I have nothing with which to thank her.” The difference was the love of God.

As Pedro worsened and struggled through the extreme pain, prayer was the only thing that brought him peace. The ending of Pedro’s story is bittersweet. On November 16, 2012 Pedro chose to leave the hospital to die at his parent’s home in the district



~ image illustration by Quazar Tuballes



The Stones Fly Softer

In 2009,

the Seventh-day Adventist Church set out to conduct Bible meetings in the small Timorese town of Uitoan.* Like 98% of Timor-Leste, the people of Uitoan are of the Catholic religion—Catholicism blended strongly with spiritualism, ancestor worship and animism. Due to a combination of the exercised power of the Catholic church, a pride in protecting their perceived identity, and years of learned injustice and violence from recent Timorese history, the Adventist Church often faces hardship and persecution when trying to share the love of God and the truths of the Bible. This was the case in Uitoan.

of Lautém. While there, his family experienced nightly attacks from spirits harassing the family on account of Pedro.

He longed to return to Dili where he had found peace. Sadly, his condition which he had struggled against for six years claimed his life before he could do so. We don't know, but we pray that in the end, he gave his heart to God. For all of us, the only hope is the Master Healer's touch on our hearts—to heal us for an eternity

Please pray that God will help us reflect God's love in every situation here in Timor-Leste and send us trained volunteer nurses to share in the medical work.

Luke 19:10 NKJV **“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

~ by Wesley Szamko

During the first two days of the meetings, people from town gathered and stoned those attending and conducting the meetings. It was so intense that the meetings were cancelled. When the local and district police were called, they refused to help in any way.

In 2010, the representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church again returned to conduct Bible meetings in Uitoan. The struggle was the same; however, this time the leaders persevered and the meetings continued for one week in spite of the stonings. Again, the police refused to help as the stones flew. The pastor leading the meetings was even dragged off to the authorities and threatened. 2011 was the same.

In 2012, ADRA began its first project in Timor-Leste since its re-launch in the country. They chose the small Timorese town of Uitoan. Within six months, the people had access to clear, safe well water for the first time. Over the next few months, ADRA began providing people with materials and training to build toilets. Illness from impure water and poor hygiene began to disappear. The people no longer had to suffer from the difficulty of relieving themselves in the jungle during the monsoon rains.

Relationships were built.

In 2012, the Seventh-day Adventist Church returned to conduct Bible meetings in the small town of Uitoan. On the seventh day of the meetings, the rocks flew again. Four people were injured as the rocks hit them. But this time there was a difference. The police showed up quickly, firing their guns in the air and chasing the attackers away.

- continue page 17



A Morning Call

16

It was another hot sunny Sabbath morning in September--our first Sabbath upon our arrival from our Annual Leave. As I went to say hello to the ladies of our local church, I was happily surprised to notice that two of them were expecting! One of them was sister Maria*. Seeing them so round brought back memories of nearly six years ago when I was just like them, happy and eager to see the face of my firstborn child. In my broken Tetum I tried to congratulate them and show my happiness for them. And as we talked, I was happy to hear both of them were feeling healthy and their babies seemed to be ok. We enjoyed the rest of the day in fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

Early Sunday morning I received a phone call from our pastor. "Doctor," he said. "Maria had an accident last night. She is in the hospital. The local doctor says the baby is dead." I hung up the phone and raced to go to the hospital. "Lord," I prayed urgently. "Help me! Help them!" As I drove to the hospital, thoughts were flying in my mind. I knew there was not much I could do at this

~ by Wesley Szamko

STORIES OF INSPIRATION

point other than to bring them love and hope from Jesus.

The hospital ward was noisy, smelly and hot. Right in the middle of the room lay Maria with her husband holding her hands and kneeling beside her bed, crying. Around Maria were six other women showing sympathy with their presence. I held her hand and stroked her forehead. She silently shed tears. I did too. Nobody said anything. After a few minutes I left the room to find more information. After talking with the caring doctor, I discovered that the passing of the baby was not due to the accident the night before.

Sadly, according to the ultrasound, the baby had already passed away nearly a month ago. Maria was eight months along when all this happened.

Two days after a funeral was held at Maria's house. Maria's immediate family did not participate or show her any kind of sympathy because they don't share the same faith.

Like Maria, there are many, many women here that know nothing about prenatal care nor the importance of healthy eating and drinking during pregnancy. Please pray for the development of Advent Health in Timor Leste. We need your support to continue offering wholistic health care to the people in Timor. Thank you and God bless you.

East Timor Missionary Association

Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world, gaining independence after a memorandum in 1999. As a church, Timor-Leste is also the youngest country among the 18 countries of the Southern-Asia Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1999, the Adventist presence was small with just a single church consisting of eight local members and approximately nine foreign members from around the world who were there as United Nations workers. With Protestantism accounting for less than 0.5% of the population, the growing of God's work in this country

has strongly collided with the traditions of the majority religion which claims 98% of the nation as members. Wrong impressions, long-held beliefs and the pressure of very difficult life circumstances has created a strong defense and prejudice in their mind regarding minority religions.

However, the people have a deep interest and desire to know the Three Angel Message and follow the truth. They want to know more but the influence of suspicious neighbors and majority religion spies makes them fearful to learn more. Any permanent change can come about only with earnest prayer and struggles for souls combined with the power of the Holy Spirit. More workers are needed to reach the people. In the midst of a 2006 political crisis that hit the country, Pastor Inaciu da Kosta along with local and Indonesian missionaries founded ETMA (East Timor Missionary Association) to train young

people to serve in the fields of the Lord.

With no available funds but a strong determination and belief in the power of God, the ETMA campus was founded on 2 ½ acres of land from Pastor Inaciu's family. Simple facilities such as dormitories made from available plant materials were built and training began. Monthly costs to train one missionary are approximately \$20 with funding from mission-minded friends from all over the world.

By the end of the first year, 67 souls had accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and every year God's work has continued to move forward. In spite of bullying and discrimination, youth and adults continue to desire training but at present there is not enough funding. However, we trust that God will provide as He has continuously done so. As the prophet Zechariah wrote, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord".

~ by Inaciu da Kosta

The people from the town came and apologized. They said those throwing rocks were brought in from the neighboring town by the catechist. They even asked the pastor conducting the meetings to come back and conduct more meetings in the town on health and the Bible. "It's different, Pastor! It's different!" the members who helped with the meetings told me. The rocks flew softer and the people's hearts were open.

What made the change? What opened the doors? It was following the example of Jesus.

"The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago--a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." MH143

Please pray that God will give us courage as we face difficulties so that we can proclaim God's love and word fearlessly.

Isaiah 41:10 NKJV "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

*Tetun for "little"—not the town's real name. ~ by Wesley Szamko

17

ADRA Timor-Leste's First Project

STORIES OF INSPIRATION

~ by Anita Sabot, ADRA Timor-Lesta

In January 2012 ADRA Timor-Leste, Asia's newest ADRA office, began its very first project, "Clean Water for Uma Tolu". The goal was to provide clean water within a 2 minute walking distance to over 180 households.

Some of the villagers previously used shallow wells that a local laboratory declared to have e-coli levels "too numerous to count". Other villagers had to walk up to 2 km to the river in order to wash and hand carry unclean river water to their homes for cooking and drinking.

Once the 12 pump stations were installed, each village chief and many villagers expressed their joy and delight for having clean water so close to their homes. They said it tastes very good, and when they wash themselves, it doesn't make their skin itch as did the water from their shallow wells.

Along with this water project, ADRA also provided hygiene education for women and schoolchildren. We had an overwhelming response from the women in each village who participated in the training. We targeted 280 women with direct training on hygiene but ended up with well over 450 attending! They all learned body hygiene, kitchen hygiene, and sanitation hygiene.

Villager Maria Da Silva said, "My family used to drink dirty water from the river and would often get diarrhea from it. I would also use a lot of my time and energy to fetch water from the river at least twice a day and sometimes more. My family would never wash their hands before eating or after going to the toilet. [Now] it takes me a few minutes to get water and my family washes their hands regularly. We are grateful that ADRA has brought clean water to our community."



TREASURE CHEST



Were

you thirsty today? Did you go to the nearby river to get a drink? No? Really? Well, Gramma Antonina, a 67 year old mother and grandmother who lives in Timor-Leste, would tell you how blessed you are. To her good, clean water truly is the gift of life. Gramma Antonina grew up in a poor family who lived in the country. Instead of going to school, she and her siblings would help their parents on their farm. One of their jobs was to fetch water. Each day, Antonina and her siblings would make several trips to the river where they would dig a hole in the bank and wait for the water to settle. They would then scoop the water into jerry cans and carry it back up the steep hill towards home. This was a very hard job that took hours, but it was a very important part of daily life.

As years passed, Gramma Antonina married but still continued her daily task. She could see that the water she collected, especially during the rainy season, was dirty and made her family sick, but it was the only drinking water she had. Without it they could not survive.

Can you imagine drinking water that you know would make you sick and not being able to do anything about it? How sad!

Then, Gramma Antonina's life changed forever. Soldiers from another country came to Timor-Leste. She and her family were so afraid that they fled to the jungle—at least there they could be safe, they thought.

However, living in the jungle was not easy. Finding food and water was a struggle. Sometimes, if they were lucky, they would find cassava, greens or berries to eat.

At other times they would go hungry for days. On top of this, the water they drank was polluted, gave them worms and weakened their already frail bodies.

Gramma Antonina knew that this was no way to bring up a young family but she had no choice. She was doing her best to protect her children—and this seemed to be the only way to do it.

If life wasn't hard enough, one day Gramma Antonina's daughters Louisa, 3, and Maria, 2, came across a creek. They were so thirsty and tired and the water was right there. So, they went ahead and drank and drank from it. The poor little girls didn't know that the water was very polluted. The water made them so sick and they were so weak because they had little to eat. Sadly, they died and Gramma Antonina cried and cried. Poor Gramma Antonina!

Years later after the soldiers left and Gramma Antonina's family was safely back in their old home, something very, very sad happened. Gramma Antonina's husband became sick and later died. Why? It was the same reason as before: polluted, unsafe water. How Gramma Antonina wished that she and the others in her village

could have good water to drink and use.

But there is good news. Some kind people heard Gramma Antonina's sad, sad story. They were so sad for her that they decided to help. Some gave money and others had fund-raisers and gave the money to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). ADRA came to Gramma Antonina's community and did many things. They taught the people how to be more healthy and what to do so they wouldn't get so sick. They even built clean restrooms to make life easier for the people. And, best of all, they built 12 water stations where the people could get safe, clean water from a good well! The people could see that these ADRA workers really loved Jesus.

Now Gramma Antonina is happy. She has clean drinking water and a clean restroom. Although she has to share the water and restroom with more than 300 people in her village, she is grateful because now no one will get sick like they used to. She hopes that one day each family will have their own toilet and water source.

~ by Alexandra Marek, ADRA Australia



Mariano's Story

YOUTH LINK

My name is Mariano da Cruz. I'm 19 years old and an Adventist youth living in Timor-Leste. Before I became an Adventist, I didn't understand the Bible and the truth, but I did have an Adventist friend that would always tell me things from the word of God. One day my friend invited me to participate in one of their programs called Spiritual Faithfulness Development (EFD). After that, I began to study the Bible with an Adventist missionary.

Finally, I made the decision to be baptized and was baptized on December 31, 2011 when I was 17. Nowadays, I'm a student in the third year of secondary school but I'm also trying to be an Adventist missionary and preach the gospel.

CHALLENGES

I face a lot of challenges when I go to preach the gospel. I've been beaten, had people make a plan to destroy my life and faced persecution at school from my teachers and headmaster. I refused to go to school on Saturdays so the teachers and head master forced me to drop out of school. My parents were very angry with me over my refusal to go to school on Saturdays so they have disowned me. As a re-

sult, my Bible study student is now afraid to study with me after what has happened to me. This all makes me sad because I want to go on with my studies and learn. Also, it hurts to have my family so upset with me.

HELPING AND BLESSING

Even though I have a lot of challenges, I'm very happy because before I was an Adventist, I didn't have peace in my life. I would create problems with my family and friends. Also I was sick with ulcers. I often had to go to the hospital for treatment and medicine but that didn't work so I would go to a sorcerer but that didn't heal me. It was so bad that people called me Ulcerous instead of by my name. After I began studying the Bible, my ulcers were healed and I found peace in my life because I found the truth and now choose the right ways.

So I'm very thankful to our God because His help and blessings always accompany me even I have problems or am suddenly in dangerous situations. I trust Him to take care of me in all things. In fact, just now God has provided a way for me to start at a new school.

It's still a challenge because I'm not getting credit for my first period class that includes exams on Saturday but in all things, I am grateful for what God has done in my life. Being an Adventist youth here is very difficult as I'm mentioned but it's the very best way for me.

19

Lola's Story

YOUTH LINK

My name is Maria Leolina Dos Santos Morais or Lola for short. I'm 18 and a Seventh-day Adventist youth in Timor-Leste facing Sabbath challenges. Before I became an Adventist, I didn't understand the Bible and had never heard about the Sabbath day. That changed when I was in my second year of secondary school. I began studying the Bible with my friend Mariano Da Cruz who had become an Adventist. We had been classmates in junior high so I knew what he was like back then. I saw his behavior changing and I started to wonder why. So we would sit together and he would talk about God's love.

He was also a good leader and the teacher chose him to be a class leader and I became the class secretary. Sometimes we had to lead the class when the teacher didn't come. During those times, Mariano used those opportunities to explain the word of God and that was very interesting to me. So I asked him to study the Bible together. Then the pastor from the Adventist church had a spiritual faithfulness development program and I was invited to attend. I went to every session and was very happy because I was learning many new things. Finally, I decided to sanctify the Sabbath day (keep the Sabbath). After that I continued Bible studies until I was baptized on October 17, 2012.

After I baptism I went back to my house but I faced a lot of challenges with my family and community. The chief of the village decided that he would drive me out if I invited my Adventist friends to enter our village.

He also told me they planned to kill any Adventists.

In my school it was more of the same. My old friends hate me and avoided me. I also had Sabbath problems and the head master decided to drop me from school. All this made me very, very sad. I'm young and need friends and family but, in spite of it all, I'm happy because the decision that I have taken is a good one. Maybe all these challenges that I face are part of God's plan to make me stand firm in faith. I realize that when we follow God's way, we may have to suffer, but I also know that God always helps me.

He has opened the way for me go to a new school in another place to continue my studies. Please pray for me because even at the new school, I have a Sabbath problem so I cannot take the exams and get full class credit.

NOTE: Not only has Mariano struggled with the reaction from friends and family, but three months ago he was attacked and beaten by a group of 10-12 others including youth and a relative of a community leader because of his faith. He and Lola were threatened and intimidated by his school, but after refusing to compromise, the school leaders forced them to leave the school. The school in Lautém District refused to allow Sabbaths off and refused to transfer Mariano, effectively halting his education. However, Mariano has been accepted into the Muslim school in Dili with Sabbaths off, but still may lose the school year as the old school will not give a letter giving permission for the new school to let him take the government exams. Please pray for these dedicated young people who are doing their best to stand firm in their faith in spite of incredible persecution.. - Pastor Wesley Szamko



Batar Daan (Boiled Corn)

Batar Daan is a traditional Timor-Leste soup. This delicious soup is eaten at lunch time and unlike most Timorese dishes, Batar Daan is eaten without rice.

RECIPE



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups of pinto beans
- 1/2 cup of red beans (they are small)
- 1 cup of raw peanuts
- 2 cups of dried chopped white corn
- 1 medium 'Asian pumpkin'
- 18 stalks of pumpkin leaves

HEALTH BENEFITS OF CORN AND SQUASH

- Corn is a versatile vegetable that is a good source of nutrients. Corn is a low-fat complex carbohydrate, has fat-fighting kernels and is good, hearty and satisfying.
- All varieties of squash are rich in carotene. Carotene has been proven to be beneficial at preventing cancer and lung disease.

METHOD:

- In a big plastic container mix beans, peanuts and corn together. Wash well and drain. Set aside.
- In a large pot combine the beans, peanuts and corn with enough water to cover them. Boil until soft, approximately 45 minutes to an hour.
- While you wait for the legumes and corn to cook, wash and peel the pumpkin. Cut pumpkin into small chunks. Set aside.
- Next remove the pumpkin leaves from the stalks. Wash and drain. Cut the leaves in small pieces. Set aside.
- Once the legumes and corn are soft. Carefully add the pumpkin chunks and cook for 10 more minutes or until pumpkin is soft.
- When the pumpkin is soft, add the leaves to the pot, stir for a few seconds then turn off the stove.
- Your Batar Daan is ready to serve and eat!

NOTE: BATAR DAAN IS INDEED BOILED CORN. The traditional way of cooking this soup does not require soaking the beans overnight. Feel free to do so if you prefer it this way. Also it does not require seasoning of any kind while cooking. However, the Timorese family will have a small bowl with salt at the table to season the soup according to individual taste. Enjoy!



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored sleeveless top, is sitting on a beach. She is looking out at the ocean towards a bright sunset. The sun is a large, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a golden light across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface. The waves are gentle and rhythmic. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Complete Closure to the Past

The Book of Ruth is a narrative of seven people: Elimelech and his wife Naomi, their two sons Mahlon and Kilion, their spouses Orpah and Ruth, and Boaz. Elimelech and his family were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. The family moved temporarily to the land of Moab to avoid the consequence of the famine that hit Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1). While in Moab, the two boys married Moabite women. The story unfolds that Elimelech, Mahlon, and Kilion died in Moab, leaving Naomi with the two daughters-in-law to care for. When Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem, it was Ruth who persisted, followed Naomi and later married Boaz, a near kinsman of Ruth.

— photo by Gail Hoyal & Pearl Tuplano



There are many lessons we can learn from this story but the one lesson I treasure the most is to put a complete closure to the past! I heard of a story that a woman borrowed a diamond from a neighbor to attend a wedding and lost it. Though the lender of the diamond forgave the lady for losing it, the borrower went on self-imposed hardship and poverty, even in starvation, for years to save every penny with a determination to repay the value of the diamond. A few years later, the lender accidentally met the borrower, and the lender was astonished to see the weary and haggard look of the borrower. Inquiring as to what was going wrong with the borrower, the lender discovered that she was still worried over the diamond. The lender exclaimed, "Why have you suffered when I forgave you? In fact, the diamond you lost was a fake diamond!" This story illustrates our human tendency to hold onto the past, especially the wrongs and the mistakes we've done!

The Bible equates our remembrance of the unpleasant past as a hindrance our spiritual journey. We are encouraged to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." The focus of Christian journey is to

her people. Ruth said, **"Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried"** (Ruth 1:16, 17, NKJV). Ruth's past life identity was not a good one - she was a Moabite! Genesis 19:37 tells that she belongs to a family line of a mother who gave birth to a son by spending a night with her father! Ruth knew that leaving Naomi to go back to her people meant to go back to a lifestyle that dictated patterns contrary to the Creator God. Ruth, in her association with Naomi, well understood the greatness of God who personally cares for her. The Moabites knew that the God of Israel was a great God (Elohim) because of the mighty things He has done for the Israelites. But, when she said that "your God my God," she did not use the Hebrew term Elohim but she used the term Yahweh (a personal God). Because Elohim has now become Yahweh to her, in awe and reverence of the Hebrews for their God and in full surrender to Him, she was determined to put a complete closure to her past!

But, what was the result of her bold decision to put a complete closure to her past? In Chapter 4:21 we find that Boaz (son of Rahab the harlot) in the union of Ruth gave birth to a son by the name of Obed and thus gave Ruth the honor of becoming a great great grandmother of Jesus (See Matthew 1:5).

What is your past? Is it marked with what apostle Paul speaks about; "falsehood," "anger," "laziness," "stealing," "engaging in unwholesome talks," "bitterness," "rage," "anger," "brawling," "slander," and "malice?" (See Ephesians 4:25-32). God wants us to know that in Christ we are "a new creature" and old things have passed away and all things have become new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Like Ruth determine to "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Like Ruth, we also have the heritage of the heavenly lineage because we are **"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"** (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). ~ by Gratian Perera

DEVOTIONAL

"run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1,2 NKJV).

Ellen G. White writes, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (Life Sketches, p. 196). Ruth had learned well to put a complete closure to her past and fix her eyes on Jesus because she had seen God's leading and His teaching in her past history. Is there a past history you cannot forget?

The most intriguing statement of the book of Ruth is the response of Ruth when Naomi asked her to return to

Pastor Gratian Perera is a local church pastor as well as the Personal Ministries and Health Departments Director for the Northern Australian Conference. Pastor Perera has 29 years of pastoral experience and has served as a director in the AMiCus, Family Ministries, Health, Sabbath School/Personal Ministries and Youth departments for the Southeast Asia Union Mission in Singapore as well as its Voice of Prophecy School director.

INTERNATIONAL • SSD CAMPOREE

Jakarta 2014
Indonesia



BUPERTA PRAMUKA

National Camporee Site



JULY 1-6 2014

Cibubur, Jakarta,
Indonesia

*Come and join the
2nd SSD Camporee*

REGISTRATION

\$40 Basic Package
(Exclusive of Meals)

\$70 Complete Package
(Inclusive of Meals)

Contact your Union Youth
Director for more information
DEADLINE: April 30, 2014

