

Outlook

SECOND QUARTER 2013 • SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION



Indonesia:
Unity & Diversity

Outlook

SECOND QUARTER 2013

02

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)

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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

COVER PHOTOS: BRUCE SUMENDAP (WIUM) AND JOHN DUROE (SSD COMMUNICATION ARCHIVES)

DRAWING ILLUSTRATIONS: ROY ESPINA



what's inside

01

DEPARTMENTS

- 04 **EDITORIAL:** Bhinneka Tunggal Ika “Unity in Diversity”
- 06 **FEATURED COUNTRY OVERVIEW:** Indonesia at a Glance
- 08 **FEATURE:** 3am Hope Ministry: Creative Outreach in Jakarta
- 09 **FEATURE:** Diary of a Church Planter

03

02

FIELD NEWS

- 10 Dhaka Holds 2013 Union-wide Women’s/Shepherdess Convention
- 11 Adventist Community Services in Negros Occidental
- 10 Adventists respond to Bangladesh factory collapse disaster
- 12 Dr. Myun Ju Lee appointed BAUM president
- 12 New Pakistan union president appointed
- 12 BAUM Children’s and Family Ministries Seminars at BASC
- 13 Myanmar Adventist Community Services assists local schools
- 13 Health and Hope seminar bring gospel to 300

03

FEATURES

- 16 **TREASURE CHEST:** Faith As Big as a Watermelon Seed
- 18 **YOUTH LINK:** Why Lord?
- 19 **ADRA:** ADRA’s Bamboo Project Seeks to Aid West Java Coastal Communities
- 20,21 **RECIPE:** Sayur Asem, Veggie Meat Rendang, Klappertaart
- 22 **DEVOTIONAL:** Gail’s Story: Suffering is Optional

Bhinneka Tunggal

“Unity in Diversity” EDITORIAL

04

I can still remember my first taste of Indonesia. Years ago when my husband and I worked on the island of Guam, we decided to spend the holidays in Bali, Indonesia. It was our very first trip there and as a novice traveler, I was mesmerized by everything – the colorful batik, the intricate handicrafts, the gracious people, the peaceful coexistence of diverse religions and the amazing nature. It was all too wonderful and charming but what happened after our visit to the Monkey Temple sealed it for me. After staying one step ahead of the monkey pack that roamed the temple grounds all morning, we were famished and found a small local restaurant nestled in a scenic spot. Thankfully the prices fit our limited budget so we squeezed in among the crowd. Mouth-watering smells teased us as the waiter passed by our table with steaming plates but nothing prepared me for that first bite.

My husband loves to tell the story of how I ate the fern salad, rice and saucy vegetables...with tears streaming down my face. He was more than a little concerned and wondered if I was overtired or had a headache or was having some bizarre post-traumatic response to our morning with the monkey gang. When he asked what was wrong, I replied between sniffles, “It’s soooooo GOOD!” For you see, I was experiencing my first taste of Indonesian cuisine in all its chili-greatness. The spiciness and heat made my mouth burn, my lips numb, my eyes water and my heart soar for it began an addiction to anything fiery that has lasted to this day. So I unashamedly acknowledge that my first taste of Indonesia made me fall in love with a country, culture and cuisine that continues to delight me.

In my reminiscing, I realized that **“delight”** is the perfect word for my overall experience there. To me, delight is a combination of wonder and surprise as in **“I’m so amazed by what I’m experiencing and what makes it even better is that it’s unexpected or a surprise”** - not because I expected less but because I didn’t know just how wonderful it would be.



Ika

I hope the “**taste**” of Indonesia that we’re offering in this issue of Outlook delights you while capturing your attention and heart like my first taste did. Indonesia is as diverse as it is beautiful; after all, its national motto is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or “**Unity in Diversity**”.

With this in mind, we’re featuring tastes of both Eastern and Western Indonesia. Learn about the history of the Adventist work in both areas. See how God has led dedicated pioneers of old as well as modern-day ones in reaching out to those who need Him there. See how a variety of evangelistic approaches united by a desire to share the gospel is wonderfully working there. See how God’s working in a child’s life brings renewed faith to an entire family in our Treasure Chest story. See God’s faithfulness in the midst of man’s struggles in our Feature stories and Stories of Inspiration. And don’t forget to try our Recipe section; The chili-infused Veggie Meat Rendang is calling to me.



Now it’s your turn to get a taste of Indonesia and through these stories to “**taste and see that the Lord is good...**” (Psalm 34:8) May this issue remind you of how God has worked and is working in your life too so you can “**delight yourself in the Lord...**” (Psalm 37:4)

[TERESA COSTELLO]

05



Indonesia at a Glance

FEATURED COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The Republic of Indonesia is a country in Southeast Asia. With 34 provinces it is home to more than 237 million people, making it the world's fourth most populous country. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, although it is not a muslim state. It shares land borders with Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Malaysia.

As early as the seventh century this archipelago has been an important trade route during the Sriwijaya and Majapahit empires. Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms flourished for many centuries. Islam was introduced by traders in the 13th century. The natural resources, especially spices, attracted Europeans to occupy Indonesia bringing Christianity along with them.

After World War II, Indonesia gained independence from Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation on August 17, 1945. Today Indonesia's growing economy of 6.4% is the world's 16th largest.

In 1900 an American Adventist missionary by the name of Ralph Waldo Munson arrived in Padang, West Sumatra. Together with his family they opened an English school and established the first Adventist church in the country, then known as the East Indies. In 1912 Petra Tunheim from Australia opened the first church in Java,

Kramat Pulo. Munson and Tunheim mentored several early Adventist Indonesian pioneers. These local pioneers included Samuel Rantung who brought the message to Sulawesi, Immanuel Siregar to Sumatra, Pieterz to Maluku islands and Direja to the rest of Java.

The tremendous growth of the church led to the establishment of the Indonesia Union Mission (IUM) in 1929. In 1964 IUM was divided into two unions: West Indonesia Union headquartered in Jakarta and East Indonesia Union headquartered in Manado. The combined membership of the two unions is 200,000.

EAST INDONESIA

The East Indonesia Union Conference (EIUC) was organized in 1964 as a Union Mission and was reorganized in 1998 as a Union Conference. Covering two out of the five major islands in Indonesia, the territory of East Indonesia Union Conference (EIUC) consists of three conferences, five missions, two districts, and one field.

Out of the almost 240 million people in Indonesia, 22 million are in East Indonesia. This part of Indonesia was greatly affected by colonial powers when the first wave of foreign powers arrived in the early 1500s looking for the Spice Islands, the Moluccas. After

06

PHOTO BY BRYAN SUMENDAP





the arrival of the Spaniards, then came the Portuguese and the British, who were later forcefully replaced by the Dutch in the 1700s. Because of the centuries-long colonial rule, many tribes in East Indonesia, such as the tribes in Maluku and Minahasa, eventually assimilated the foreign culture. Most of the then animistic-practicing people were converted to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Thus, many parts of East Indonesia are Christians such as North and Central Sulawesi, the Sangihe and Talaud islands, the Maluku islands and a large part of West Papua. With the exception of the mostly Muslim population of South Sulawesi, East Indonesia is well known for being mostly dominated by Christians and rich in natural resources.

In Indonesian history, this part of Indonesia is also known for the separatist movements that played a role in previous rebellions. In 1960s several rebellions arose in the Islands of Sulawesi and Maluku. During the last two decades one such movement also appeared in West Papua. Apparently such movements are triggered by the feeling of mistreatment by the central government toward the local governments. Also in the last two decades there have been racial and religious genocides in Maluku and Central Sulawesi that have claimed thousands of lives.

The Adventist work started in East Indonesia when Pastor R. W. Munson in 1911 baptized a young man named Samuel Rantung in Singapore. This young man eventually, due to his sickness, returned to his hometown in Lowu,

Ratahan, in the early months of 1920. This was when he first sowed the truth among his villagers and family. He later returned to Singapore but had to eventually return to Ratahan because of a recurrence of his sickness. He arrived home on December 25, 1921 along with M. E. Direja and Pastor F. A. Detamore and five days later, the first groups of Adventists, 22 in all, were baptized.

From there the work quickly spread to Minahasa, especially when Albert Munson, the son of R. W. Munson, arrived to take a leadership role in 1923. Later, Manado dentist Phang introduced the Sabbath message to his patients who later formed the first SDA Church in Manado in Tikala. From Manado the work quickly spread in other areas of North Sulawesi, then to Ambon, Maluku in 1926, and finally reached South Sulawesi, Papua, Central Sulawesi and the Sangihe Talaud Islands.

Today the Adventist work is progressing well in many parts of East Indonesia. We now operate a hospital, two clinics, a University, four boarding schools, more than fifty elementary and high schools, three language schools, an aviation mission, and a radio station. However, we still do face challenges in places where it is predominantly Muslim, such as in South Sulawesi. For example, when you are on a bus to Toraja from Makassar, you will not find a single Adventist church for a stretch of 200 km. We also have challenges reaching the unentered tribes in Central Sulawesi and Papua. We need more missionaries who are willing to work with the tribal people.

07

WEST INDONESIA

West Indonesia Union Mission (WIUM) territory comprises 24 out of 34 provinces of the country and serves 210 million people or 88% of Indonesia's population where 90% are Muslim.

There are 800 churches and 108,000 members. Today the Adventist church in West Indonesia Union Mission serves over 100,000 patients annually through three accredited tertiary hospitals and clinics. It operates 372 schools and 2 universities with enrollment up to 40,000 last year.

[This overview is a compilation of photos and reports from Bruce Sumendap, the WIUM Associate Communication Director and Bryan Sumendap, current ELUC Associate Communication Director]



3AM Hope Ministry: FEATURE Creative Outreach in Jakarta

Since the formation of Jakarta International SDA Church (JISDAC) on October 25, 1988, the pioneers, board members, and congregation have maintained the goal of reaching the English speaking communities in Jakarta, Indonesia. Over the course of its 20 years history, JISDAC had conducted many evangelistic efforts, but none of them seemed to last long-term. As so often happened, the fire dimmed after the evangelistic efforts.

However, the fire for evangelism was rekindled in 2008 during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of JISDAC by Pastor Milton Pardosi, the JISDAC pastor at that time. He motivated the JISDAC Personal Ministry department to come up with a long-term evangelism program.

Various thoughts and ideas were discussed, but one idea that clearly emerged was that Adventists in Jakarta needed a native English-speaking pastor to lead English-speaking communities to Christ.

In early 2009 that zeal and desire to do something in the English communities of Jakarta became an action plan. With urging and support from Pastor Pardosi, the board members of JISDAC approved the formation of The 3 Angels' Messages of Hope International Ministry or the 3AM Hope ministry as it is commonly called.

The desire for evangelism was so intense that while the search for an international speaker was ongoing, the board members and 3AM Hope committee launched the ministry with a temporary speaker, Pastor Robin.

Thus the historical journey of 3AM Hope ministry began on April 22, 2009 at the auditorium of the Standard Chartered building in Jalan Satrio, South Jakarta. We started a program called Devotional Hour to be held every Wednesday evening at 7 pm to offer midweek encouragement for attendees. With the exception of one day when we were forced to close due to a strong earthquake, we have provided this program week after week without fail.

For the first three months or so, AIAS (Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies) professors and ministerial students traveled from the Philippines to

Jakarta to serve as program speakers. With God's blessings, we later hired a permanent speaker, Pastor Bob Hancock Jr., who served for about a year before returning to the America in June 2010. Thankfully, AIAS once again stepped in to provide speakers until October 2010 when God provided Pastor Tendai Jude Timuri. Under his guidance, a new chapter in our history began.

Shortly after Pastor Timuri's arrival, more functional accommodations became available at another location and so 3AM Hope Ministry launched a new Sabbath morning worship program (Saturday Power Hour) in December 2010 in conjunction with the existing Wednesday evening service. The Sabbath program started with only about 20 people but, glory to God, today we have about 200 people worshipping together on Sabbath mornings.

In addition, 3AM Hope ministry launched its radio programs. The Truth Alive radio program is broadcast four times a month and the Celebrate Life, Life is a Gift program is heard weekly. The Celebrate Life, Life is a Gift program is a lifestyle show combining health and spirituality. It is very popular and has attracted listeners from across Indonesia and Singapore based on the text messages we've received. Some listeners have even come to the Saturday Power Hour to worship with us.

Recently, a new Bible study group has begun meeting with about 40 to 50 non-Adventists attending regularly.

Although we have seen at least 10 baptisms through this ministry, we realize that the work has just begun. We dream big things for the Lord Almighty through this ministry. We are beyond grateful for all the prayers, financial support, opinions, and time given by JISDAC members, pastors, conference and union officers, and the larger Adventist communities everywhere without whom this ministry would not be successful.

[TANU SUTARSA]



FEATURE

Diary of a Church Planter

Dianne Almocera is a registered nurse. Through the 1000 Missionary Movement program, she served as a missionary for ten months in the small barangay of Casile, Laguna in central Luzon, Philippines. She didn't expect to find herself in charge of church construction but circumstances proved that God was ready to complete such a big project through her. Below are excerpts of her online posts journaling her experience through Facebook. – Gay Deles

MARCH 10: Ready to be dispatched to our mission field. Oh dear Lord, send your Holy Spirit to guide us and your angels to walk with us. We love you Lord!

MARCH 25: Praise God for the wonderful week. Things I'm thankful for: **1.** From the 12 Adventists who worshipped with us last Saturday, 24 joined us in worship this Sabbath. I realize that fervent prayer + Holy Spirit + unity = success is the formula for my everyday house visitations, making friends and praying. **2.** Our congregation is growing and I know that soon someone will be touched by God to donate to a church building for the people here. **3.** We had the opportunity to briefly share our mission experience during the Santa Rosa, Cabuyao and Laguna Adventist federation meeting and visit our AUP (college) friends and missionary colleagues. **4.** We visited, bonded and worshipped with the Casile settlers. **5.** It rained last Friday so we are happy to have free water again for showering, cooking and washing our clothes and the dishes. God is good and God is great.

APRIL 25: Am sick due to the stressful solicitation week during my visit to Mindanao but praise God because He poured out His blessings through people who donated to the Casile church building project.

APRIL 29: Today I realized how my profession as a nurse suits my calling as a missionary. I have been called as the only nurse in my mission field and a great task was placed on my weak shoulders. Lord, please help me. Use me - an ordinary person - for Your glory. May I be a light to the people here.

MAY 29: I want to visit houses today but I can't leave THE CHURCH BUILDING PROJECT. SO MUCH TO DO AND SO MANY THINGS AND WORKERS to manage. I'm foreman, engineer, accountant, nurse, cook, baby sitter, and solicitation manager at the same time. Being a missionary is so tough. But at the end of a very busy day, I have a blissful smile because I know that everything done is for God.

JUNE 25: As a missionary, I have seen a sad reality in our churches today. Many evangelistic seminars are organized and baptisms are being conducted but nurturing and true Bible study does not follow. That is why after baptism, many of them leave the church due to the fact that they have not learned the true meaning of their acceptance of Christ and the symbolism of their baptism. I have been inspired and challenged by the Holy Spirit as a missionary to study more about the Bible and give Bible studies to inspire Adventist brethren to hold firm to their faith even when I'm gone. I might only be able to reach a few, but they will be true to their faith while waiting for the soon coming of Jesus Christ.

JUNE 21: God is doing great miracles for our church building project. As of now, the roof is fully put in place. Today, we are furnishing the walls and the flooring.

JUNE 29: Today I realized how true it is that GOD USES ORDINARY PEOPLE. We were sent here in Casile in March. Since the day we stepped into this village, I told myself that we will make a difference here. Although Satan did his best to destroy the dream of building a church and did everything possible to make us lose faith, God inspired us and sent people to help us not only financially but

through their prayers. This past Sabbath, June 22, was a happy day for us because we used the church that God built through your financial help for the first time. Thank you very much!!!

JULY 19: God has been so good. Even though we don't yet have the windows and doors, the church is almost fully furnished.

JULY 11: I have learned that the hardest thing of being a missionary is to swallow my pride, ban my shyness and be daringly bold so I can ask people to financially assist us in our building project. My pride is consuming me but I need to swallow it because God had been calling me from the start to finish this task. Some people just don't know how hard this is and so they don't want to do what we have to do in order to finish the church. It is so arduously stressful. You are an engineer, architect, purchaser, and all-around-help to the point of doing laborer's job just to save expenses and finish the work that God started. But... I will do everything for God no matter how hard it maybe and if swallowing this pride will make a great difference, I would swallow an endless ocean of pride.

JULY 16: God is just so good. He always provides our needs. This afternoon, I bought 10 sacks of cement to finish the front design of the church building. I was very anxious after paying because there was less than 750 pesos left and it wasn't enough to pay the laborers for this week. But I stopped worrying when I remembered that God is a great God and

>> CONTINUE PAGE 13



DHAKA HOLDS 2013 UNION-WIDE WOMEN'S/SHEPHERDESS CONVENTION

Bangladesh Union Mission (BAUM) Women's/Shepherdess Ministries department launched its largest Union-wide Women's/Shepherdess Convention on March 18, 2013 in Dhaka, Bangladesh at the BAUM headquarters. The theme of "Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle WIN WELLNESS" was drawn from the Southern-Asia Pacific Division (SSD) initiative introduced during its 2012 mid-year meetings.

The 235 attendees comprised the largest women's ministries gathering in Bangladesh to date and this is especially notable in light of the political situation at that time. Initially the convention dates were March 19-22, 2013. However, political faction groups announced a 48-hour national shutdown for March 18 and warned citizens not to travel then so organizers moved the dates. This enabled the ladies



ONE OF THE ATTRACTIONS OF THIS CONVENTION WAS SPECIAL SONGS PRESENTED BY DIFFERENT GROUPS FROM THE FOUR BANGLADESH MISSIONS. THIS IS A SCENE FROM A SPECIAL SONG RENDERED BY THE BAUM LADIES GROUP UNDER EAST BANGLADESH MISSION.

to arrive on March 17 and thus avoid potential dangers during the shutdown. In spite of the potential risks to their lives, the majority braved the odds to attend because they so desired to fellowship with their sisters in Christ.

During the opening ceremony, attendees wore cultural outfits from their areas and marched in groups representing the four missions of Bangladesh. Colorfully arrayed and with joyful spirits, these ladies were part of a historic event that day.

"Never before in the 107-year history of the Adventist Church in Bangladesh has any General Conference (GC) Women's Ministries director or associate director visited Bangladesh," noted Mrs. Mahuya Roy, BAUM Health/Shepherdess/Women's Ministry director. "So," continued Roy, "Mrs. Raquel Queiroz da

Costa Arrais, GC Associate Women's Ministries Director, has made history" by her attendance as a speaker and resource person at the convention. In addition, the attendees were blessed by the presence of and presentation by Mrs. Helen B Gulfan, SSD Shepherdess/Women's Ministries director.

Pastor Alberto C Gulfan, Jr., SSD president, was also present during the inaugural session due to the country's political situation. He had attended the LEAD conference, SSD's leadership program, for BAUM workers and was scheduled to leave but could not due to the national shutdown. Realizing this as an opportunity to show his support for the Shepherdesses and women of BAUM, he was happy to attend this special event. "It is a privilege for me and all the women delegates to see and meet the SSD president, Pastor Alberto C Gulfan, Jr., in the women's convention," commented Roy during her welcome speech. "Maybe this is a providential," she concluded.

Other men were also in attendance to show their support: BAUM President Jim Brauer, BAUM Executive Secretary Timothy Roy, all BAUM departmental directors and presidents from the four missions. Brauer delivered the inaugural speech and evening devotional sermon.

Morning devotional messages were delivered by two BAUM departmental leaders: Stewardship/Sabbath School/Personal Ministries/Philanthropic Director Bibek Halder and Communication-AWR/Publishing-Spirit of Prophecy Director Benjamin Raksham. Both of them emphasized the role of women in Biblical times and present day situations.

Seminar presenters included Arrais, Gulfan, Roy, Bangladesh ADRA Director Pastor Landerson S. Santana, BAUM Executive Treasurer Sweetie Ritchil, BAUM AM Director Pr. Dilip Hagidok, and Bangladesh Adventist Seminary

and College (BASC) Academic Vice-President Dr. Robert B Bairagee. The seminars covered topics such as Ten Crooked Thoughts, Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle Through Care Groups, Life is a Balancing Act, A Time for Healing-forgiveness, Close Emotional Ties and Hope In a Hopeless World.

Attendees also enjoyed sharing their talents during the last night's special event, a cultural/social program on March 19. The BAUM WM/SI Department presented each attendee with a small gift.

"I would like to express my thankfulness to Mrs. Arrais, Mrs. Gulfan, the BAUM officers, directors, mission presidents and all the women who participated," shared Roy. "By the grace of our Lord Jesus, even though we had strikes here in Bangladesh, we were able to still have a wonderful women's Convention. We need this type of women's convention every year in Bangladesh."

[BENJAMIN RAKSHAM, BAUM]



MRS. RAQUELL ARRAIS (LEFT) AND MRS. HELEN GULFAN PLAY A LOCAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT CALLED KHUL (DRUM) DURING THE MARCH 19 CULTURAL/SOCIAL PROGRAM FOR THE 2013 BAUM WOMEN'S CONVENTION.

ADVENTISTS RESPOND TO BANGLADESH FACTORY COLLAPSE DISASTER

On April 24, an eight-story commercial building known as Rana Plaza collapsed in Savar, Bangladesh, approximately 45 kilometers from the capital city of Dhaka. The building housed five garment factories, production lines, banks, and hundreds of shops. More than 3,500 people were in the building, the majority of whom were female factory workers under the age of 25. The final death toll numbered 1,127 with 2,438 people rescued and 98 unaccounted for. Amidst the resulting world-wide debate over factory conditions and clamor for reforms, Adventists continued to assist in the rescue efforts and attempted to meet the needs of the affected families.

As soon as youth from the Dhaka Seventh-day Adventist church in the Mirpur subdistrict heard about the disaster, a group of twelve immediately responded. Ten of them were trained in disaster management with an emphasis on earthquake preparedness and potential building collapse situations. Once at the site, some of them entered the building through tunnels and holes and helped bring out 30 victims, four of them who were still alive. During an April 26 Adventist Youth evening meeting,

ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

11

The Adventist Community Services Department (ACS) of the Negros Occidental Conference extended a hand to the hundreds of fire victim families in Barangay Banago, Bacolod City on April 29, 2013. ACS Director Jimmy Quijote, Jr. collected relief supplies and dried goods to fill the empty stomachs of every family. Packs of rice, canned goods, noodles, clothes and blankets were distributed at the government school where they were sheltered. Before the distribution, Pastor Quijote gave a short comforting message to the victims and offered a prayer.

"This is such a big help for us. I kept wishing for a blanket and clothes. I am so happy for these. I have four children and our house turned to ashes but I am still thankful that none of us is missing," one of the ladies said while holding the blanket and the packed of goods she received.

[STEPHANIE LORIEZO]



FIELD NEWS

young people spontaneously collected Taka 12,100 (approximately \$160 USD) for the victims. Another group of 125 young people including a girl from Dhaka SDA Church went there on Sabbath, April 27 to help the rescue team. They assisted in pulling out three young ladies who were still alive but had been trapped inside the building. The group also recovered a number of dead bodies. In addition, they provided food and drink to some of the survivors including a lady who had been trapped for three days without food and water.

ADRA Bangladesh also responded promptly by providing oxygen tanks, masks, flashlights, hammers, shovels and other tools as preliminary assistance. ADRA Bangladesh later donated cash to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund after committee approval was received.

In terms of Adventists affected by the disaster, at least one Adventist young man, Bitu Baroi, was known to be working in one of the garment factories there. He was not among the victims whose bodies were recovered and so he remains listed among the missing. This uncertainty prevents closure for his mother works at Pollywog, an Adventist-sponsored handicraft industry located on the Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission (BAUM) campus.

The garment industry is a major foreign currency earner in Bangladesh and the biggest industry in the country. Bangladesh is the second largest garment

exporter country in the world, just next to China. Year export earning is close to twenty US Dollars to the European countries, Americas, and Australia. There are more than five thousand such factories in Bangladesh, mainly in Dhaka and Chittagong regions. The said number is only the registered factories with BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporting Association) and there are hundreds which are not under this umbrella. There are about six million factory workers, mostly women, employed directly in this industry.

ADVENTIST VOLUNTEERS TRYING TO CONSOLE A WOMAN FOUND AFTER 3 DAYS IN A RESCUE OPERATION AFTER THE APRIL 24 BUILDING COLLAPSE OF RANA PLAZA, A GARMENT FACTORY IN SAVAR, BANGLADESH. [PHOTO BY FLABIAN SHAIKAT SIKDER]



ON MAY 30, 2013 ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY, BANGLADESH (ADRA-B) REPRESENTATIVES MET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF BANGLADESH. ADRA-B COUNTRY DIRECTOR SHERPA SANTANA LANDERSON, ADRA-B COUNTRY FINANCE DIRECTOR MONILAL PASHI, AND PASTOR TIMOTHY ROY, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF BANGLADESH UNION MISSION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH (BAUM), PRESENTED A TAKA 200,000 (EQUIVALENT TO US\$2,500) DONATION TO HER EXCELLENCY SHEIKH HASINA, THE PRIME MINISTER OF BANGLADESH, FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S EMERGENCY FUND WHICH PROVIDES ASSISTANCE DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES SUCH AS THE APRIL 24 BUILDING COLLAPSE.

[BENJAMIN RAKSHAM, BAUM]

STANDING ON RUBBLE, ADVENTIST YOUTH VOLUNTEERS ASSIST IN A RESCUE OPERATION AFTER A GARMENT FACTORY IN SAVAR NEAR DHAKA BANGLADESH COLLAPSED ON APRIL 24. [PHOTO BY FLABIAN SHAIKAT SIKDER]



FIELD NEWS

DR. MYUN JU LEE
APPOINTED BAUM
PRESIDENT

On May 27, 2013, Dr. Myun Ju Lee was welcomed as the new Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission president during its mid-year meetings at the BAUM headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Prior to this appointment, he was president of Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College since October 2005.

He holds several degrees: a 1986 Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Theology, from Sahmyook University; a 2002 Master of Ministry from the Adventist Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS); and a 2005 Doctor of Ministry, also from AIAS. He is currently writing his dissertation for a PhD program from the International Institute of Church Management (online

study).

He started his career right after graduation, shepherding Seoul Dongbu SDA Church in 1986, Yangpyeong SDA Church from 1987 to 1989 and Seoul Saemoon SDA Church from 1989 to 1992. From there, he and his family spent approximately six years as missionaries in Argentina, serving at the Argentina Korean SDA Church. Afterward, they returned to Korea and he worked at the Seoul Jangdong SDA Church from 1998 to 2001.

His wife, Mrs Young Moon Kim (Lee), currently serves BAUM as the director of Children and Family Ministries in addition to her new responsibilities. The couple has two adult children.

[Benjamin Raksham, BAUM]

NEW PAKISTAN
UNION PRESIDENT
APPOINTED

Pastor Michael Ditta was appointed the new president of the Pakistan Union of Seventh-day Adventists (PKU) by the southern Asia-pacific region of the Adventist church (SSD) during its May 8, 2013 mid-year meetings.

He replaces retired pastor George Johnson who served as interim president from October 2012 until Ditta's appointment. Johnson will continue his responsibilities as the assistant to the president of Central California Conference in the North America Division, managing church plants, Bible workers and special urban outreach projects. "It's been a joy to come to Pakistan and with some measure of pain to leave. It's been good being part of this team," shared Johnson.

Ditta, a native of Pakistan, has served as a pastor in various areas in PKU with his wife and three children.

[SAMUEL NAZIR, PKU]

BAUM CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY
MINISTRIES SEMINARS AT BASC

A union-wide Children's and Family Ministries seminar was held at Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BASC) on May 30 to June 1, 2013 by the Bangladesh Union Mission (BAUM) Children's/Family Ministries department. Twenty-one participants attended this seminar from BAUM's four local missions and other institutions.

Dr. Miriam L. Andres, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) Children's/Family Ministries director, was the main speaker as well as a resource person at the event. Local resource personnel include Mrs Young Moon Lee, newly appointed BAUM Children's/Family Ministries director; Mrs Sweetie Ritchil, BAUM Treasurer; Mrs Mahuya Roy, BAUM Health/Shepherdess/Women's Ministries director; and Dr Myun Ju Lee, newly appointed BAUM president. A wide range of hands-on, active learning seminars were offered such as Why Teach Children (Basic Needs), Creative Prayer Journey, Ministry to Families is a Must,

Secrets of a Strong Family, Learning a New Song, Strategic Planning Workshop, Spiritual Tools for Children, Hour of Worship and Family Worship at Work. In addition, college students Nipa Chisim and Ishita Mondol taught a fun paper craft class during which participants made boxes and flowers out of colorful papers. Pastor Timothy Roy, BAUM Executive Secretary, conducted the closing commitment service.

Special thanks go to Mrs. Urmi Mondol, office secretary of BAUM Children's/Family Ministries (CFM) department, who tirelessly coordinated all aspects of the event during the months when the department was without a director.

[BENJAMIN, RAKSHAM, BAUM]

DR. ANDRES GUIDES ATTENDEES DURING HER WORKSHOP WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF TRANSLATOR MRS. MARY MITRA, WEST BANGLADESH MISSION CHILDREN'S/FAMILY MINISTRIES DIRECTOR.



TWO BASC STUDENTS, NIPA CHISIM AND ISHITA MONDOL, EXPLAIN THE BOX-MAKING PROCESS DURING THEIR CRAFT SEMINAR.



DIARY OF A CHURCH PLANTER....

thought about all the great things He has already done for us. Sure enough at 6pm tonight God raised the remainder through the prayers and efforts of Filipino 1,000 Movement missionaries assigned to Korea. Oh, how marvelous God works!

JULY 19: Something really amazing happened to us while we were at AUP yesterday. We were trying to find some friends but no one was home. We were getting discouraged but knocked on one more door even though we weren't sure if our friend even lived there. We were shocked when another friend (Doreen) opened the door. She was just as shocked and here is why. She hugged me tight then she exclaimed, "I have been thinking about you the whole day." She was amazed by the miracles God was doing with our church building project and felt inspired to help. She had tried to send a Facebook message but couldn't connect. So she just spent the whole day thinking about how to get in touch with me. And the next thing she knew--I'M OUTSIDE THEIR DOOR! After chatting a bit, she gave a donation for the church and she is just a 3rd year dentistry student. She has no salary but she was willing to help God's mission and God showed her the way. Thank you, God, for giving me so many great experiences and miracles since we started this church building project.

JULY 25: After months of hardships, stresses and work, happiness filled my heart upon seeing that the church is almost finished inside and out. Today, we will be buying the doors for the church.

AUGUST 11: Who told you that being a missionary is too hard? If we let GOD and HIS HOLY SPIRIT guide us, then being a missionary is not too hard; it is a wonderful and heartwarming experience. We're trying some friendship strategies to befriend people so that we can share God's word: medical mission work, sports, guitar and piano lessons and even beauty services like manicures, pedicures and hair treatments. After we reach out to them in ways that interest them like this, then they allow us to share about our faith. They are open to hearing what we have to say. For example, it's fascinating that through volleyball I was able to befriend the secretary of the barangay chairman and the town councilors. I'm sure God will touch them so that they would also open their houses for Bible study. Although we're so tired after all the services we did last week, we are happy because we successfully entered the houses of the dwellers here in our mission field and now six of them want to start Bible studies. Happy, happy, happy!

(Note: Enough money was raised for the windows so the church building itself is finished. However, the work of selfless church planters and missionaries continues.)



MYANMAR ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSISTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

On June 3-7, 2013, Myanmar Adventist Community Services (ACS) volunteers visited two primary schools and distributed stationery and education assistance to more than 154 needy students and parents in Yo Ghu and Thit Saint Gone village, Myaungmya Township in Myanmar.

June marks the beginning of the new school year in Myanmar. While there is governmental assistance for some students, there are still families who cannot even afford their children's most basic educational needs. ACS volunteers stepped in to assist these families with educational aids such as books, pens, bags, uniforms and other miscellaneous supplies.

ACS has made this project a priority. "Our volunteers have been collecting these materials and stationery [items] in many places to provide these needy children," said ACS volunteer Aung Zaw Latt.

In addition to the joyful students and parents, friends from the community also attended the event. "I am glad to work with Adventist volunteers involving in helping school children every year. I also tried to spread this news to my friends and they really appreciate this community services," expressed Daw May thaw Dar Aye, a high-ranking staff of the Israeli embassy in Myanmar.

ACS' contributions and events in the area have been quietly gathering attention from a variety of groups. "Though I am a Buddhist, I have been involving in Adventist community Services [for the] last five years. I always help and assist them and appreciate their services and sharing love to the people," concluded U Nyein Chann, a local community leader. ACS hopes to continue to be able to share Jesus in future practical, needs-based ministries such as this one.

[MYO CHAN, MYUM]

HEALTH AND HOPE SEMINAR BRING GOSPEL TO 300

A 16-member evangelistic team conducted a "Health and Hope" meeting in Nga Pyat village, Kani Township, Sagaing Region in central Myanmar on June 9-16, 2013 reaching more than 300 people with the Adventist message about physical and spiritual health.

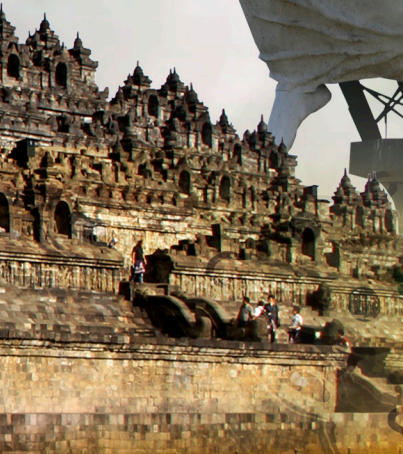
Retired pastor Tember Chit and Dr. Htwe Lay, Health Ministries director for the Adventist church in Myanmar (MAUM), spent six days presenting health and spiritual topics to one of the most difficult groups of Myanmar people to reach for the gospel. The village of Nga Pyat is populated with the local Bhamar Buddhist people. It was here that Pastor Chit, a pioneer missionary at the time, was assigned to be a missionary teacher 40 years ago. He shared the gospel and Adventist beliefs with the villagers but due to the politically volatile situation at that time, he eventually had to leave for safety reasons. So, it was a great

delight to him when some of his former students warmly welcomed the team. Other members of the team were also impressed with the welcoming attitudes of the villagers. "I have never been welcomed this way and really honored to be here," said Dr. Htwe Lay, an evangelistic team member.

As a result of the six days of presentations, health screenings, medical check-ups and casual visitations, six people accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. "The number seems small but for the most difficult area of Middle Myanmar, especially to the Bhamar Buddhist community, this is the big amount" said Yan Paing Myo, an AWR radio producer and evangelistic team member. In terms of the overall expense and results, "it costs a lot but the souls for Christ are more valuable than the cost," concluded Pastor Saw Keh, the preacher for the trip.

[MIYO CHAN, MYUM]





Indonesia



Faith As Big as a Watermelon

TREASURE CHEST

It was an afternoon, a very bright afternoon. Kristian returned home along with several friends as usual. As they passed through rice fields on the mountain side, they could hear birds chirping from a distance. Kristian seemed not to hear; he was not the usual happy and cheerful fellow he normally was. At home Mama and Papa noticed that Kristian looked sad. "You seem unhappy about something. What is bothering you, my child?" Mama asked.

16

Pulling out a folded paper with his school stamp on it, Kristian began to explain. "Mama, Papa, I'm so sorry," he said. "This is a letter from the school. My teacher says that if I don't settle my tuition, I cannot take the examination. Is it true that we still owe the school three months of my tuition, Mama?"

"It's true, Kristian, but don't let it worry you. We will pay your tuition," Mama calmly replied.

Later Mama and Papa had a very serious discussion about the fees. "Papa, you have to ask your boss to lend you some money. Kristian has to take that examination," urged Mama.

"That is impossible. This is only my second month in this job as a driver. Isn't it too soon to ask something that much?" questioned Papa. "Why don't you borrow some money from Mr. Bandar? We will pay him back after we harvest watermelon," replied Papa. "It's a brilliant idea," sighed Mama with relief. "I will go and talk with Mr. Bandar."

The following day, Mama went to meet Mr. Bandar in his palm oil plantation (kelapa sawit). Kristian's family had worked in his plantation for a long time. Even the watermelons they grew for their own use were grown in Mr. Bandar's plantation. After a long discussion, Mr. Bandar agreed to lend money to Kristian's family so Mama hurried home to give the money to Kristian.

"Take this money, Son. Give it directly to your teacher

Seed

17

as payment for your tuition. Don't forget to thank her for considering you despite the delay," instructed Mama. Kristian kissed his mother's hand. "Thank you, Mama!" he joyfully replied as he rushed out the door.

After the examination, the days passed so slowly for Kristian. "When would they hear the results? Did he even want to know the results?" he wondered. He thought of these things day after day until one day when the phone rang.

"Hello. Good morning. This is Kristian's teacher. May I speak with his parents?" said the voice on the other end. "Yes, this is Kristian's father," carefully answered Papa. "I just wanted to inform you that Kristian passed the examination, and not only did he pass but he had the highest score," pronounced the teacher.

That day was one of the happiest in the life of Kristian's family. They all prayed and gave thanks to God. And even though life was still hard, it was good for some time after that. Even though they didn't have much money, Kristian still had his dreams. He wanted to go on in school like his friends. He dreamed of a being a pilot so he could take his parents up into the sky. Such wonderful hopes and dreams! But then he would remember his family's situation and stop dreaming for a while....especially after Mama came to talk so seriously and sadly with him one night about going to junior high school.

"Son," she said with a sigh, "I want you to go back to school like your friends. But forgive us, we don't have the money." She tried to hold back her tears.

"Yes, Mama, but we still can count on our watermelon garden right? Soon it will bear fruit," reminded Kristian hopefully.

"We're worried. It's already in the dry season and many plants have died. Even Mr Badar palm trees are dry," explained mother.

Kristian was silent and pensive. He was not sad but just quiet because he was thinking of how to keep the watermelons growing. Before going to sleep, Kristian noticed his Bible. The Bible was a birthday gift from Papa but Kristian hadn't read it yet. It wasn't that interesting to him but that night, Kristian was very interested in the Bible.

He opened the Bible to the story about how faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. "If faith as a mustard seed can move mountains, maybe even greater faith can bring another miracle," he thought. "I want my faith be even bigger. Maybe ... hmm .. like the seeds of watermelon..." Kristian thought to himself trustingly. He prayed earnestly and then fell asleep.

That night he dreamed about people watering crops in very dry ground and surprisingly the plants flourished. Kristian couldn't wait to share his dream with his parents.

"Mama! Papa!" excitedly called Kristian. "I have an idea about the watermelons. We should sprinkle water directly onto each plant." "But Son, this plantation is too big," warned Mama. "How can you water it all?"

"Mama, it won't hurt to try, will it?" asked Kristian re-

spectfully. "We need to pray for the gardens and leave it all to God." Then Mama and Papa realized that they had forgotten to pray and surrender all to God. So the family began to pray and surrender everything to God...and water each plant.

Day after day, they watered the watermelons, with whatever water they find. Even though the sun was so hot. Even though they were tired. Even though their neighbors laughed at them. Still they didn't give up and as a result, God answered their prayers.

"Mama! A lot of the watermelons are ripe. The fruit is large and fresh again," Papa exclaimed one day. What wonderful words! And how wonderful to trust a God who can make one family's faith grow like the watermelon seeds.

[BRUCE SUMENDAP, WIUM/TERESA COSTELLO]

Why Lord?

YOUTH LINK

“Ma, let’s go to school. It’s getting late,” I demanded. “Okay but wait... we pray before going, right?” Mama reminded me with a smile. “Oh .. yeah .. yeah ... I forgot,” I said distractedly. “Remember, Gaby, every time you leave the house to pray first, to ask God to protect us .. Ok?” urged Mama. “Yes, Mom, I will remember,” I promised. After they left me at the school, they went on to visit church members in their homes.

After school, they returned to get me. “Pa, We go home, ya?” I asked. “Not yet, Gaby; we will visit your brother at his dorm” said Papa. “Hooray! I’m glad we are going so I can play with my cousins there,” I exclaimed happily.

I was sleepy after my long day so I sang to myself in the car and drifted off to sleep. Suddenly, I felt myself sliding and the car swerving! “Screeeeechhhhhh! Crash!” “Papa Mama, what is it?!” I screamed. I was crying and shaking when I looked out the window. Our car had crashed into a car that was now upside down. And then I saw my parents..... oooohhhh noooooooooo! “Papa .. Mama ... wake up ... wake up!” I called to my poor bloody Mama and my unconscious Papa. No, no, NOOOOOO! This cannot be happening!

In my shock, I hadn’t realized that a kind man had come to help. He opened the doors and helped move Mama and Papa and took us to the nearby hospital in his car. I kept asking, “Sir, are Daddy and Mama still alive?” over and over. He would calmly repeat again and again, “Still alive.” But I keep crying. In my heart I asked, “Why did God not take care of us? Before going out we always pray. Mama said that if we pray, God will take care of us.”

Once we were at the hospital, the kind man was busy looking after Mama and Papa and there was no one else to notice me. So I huddled alone in a corner, still crying and questioning. Finally, a policeman came over and tried to comfort me but he couldn’t answer my questions. So he then asked if I knew my family’s number so he could contact someone. While he went away to call my auntie, a board chairman from our church came and I asked him “Why didn’t God take care of my Mama and Papa; We always pray.” He tried to explain it to me but he couldn’t because I was only six years old and couldn’t understand.

Not long after, my relatives began to arrive and I started

to calm down. Plus, the kind hospital people brought me snacks, food and water.

That’s the experience of me, Gabriele, 12 years ago. Now I’m older and can understand and answer my question when I was six, “Why did God not help me, Mama and Papa?”

The answer? If God had not been taking care of us, maybe Mama and Papa would have died. My uncle later told me that after seeing the condition of the cars from the crash, it looked impossible for any passengers to have survived. If God had not been protecting us, then maybe the kind man wouldn’t have been there right then to quickly bring us to the hospital and save Mama and Papa.

This was a terrifying experience for a child but now I can look back and thank God for all He had done for me and my family. Because of Him, I am continuing my parents’ legacy of working as a servant of God. And yes, even today I never forget to pray. Why? Because the Lord Jesus has never forgotten and never will forget to take care of me.

[GABRIEL HAVELAAR WAS A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN SHE WROTE ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE. SHE IS NOW A COLLEGE STUDENT IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA MAJORING IN NUTRITION]

18

ADRA's BAMBOO Project Seeks To Aid West Java Coastal Communities

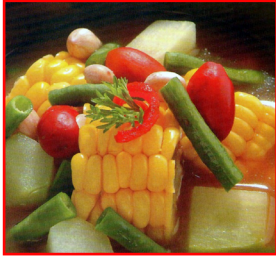
Living in the biggest archipelago in the world, Indonesian coastal communities whose livelihoods depending on coastal and marine resources are the most vulnerable facing climate-related risks such heavy intense rainfall, flood, tropical storms, and surges. The people there seldom participate in coastal zone management and develop due to lack of knowledge and skills.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Indonesia (ADRA-Indonesia) has developed a program to meet this need. BAMBOO Project aims to increase community adaptation capacity and to help villagers take mitigation measures to cope with climate change effects.

One urgent strategy of adaptation is to elevate and extend the coastline for 2 to 5 meter per year. This is done through the implementation of a sand-filled sack barrier. The villagers are asked to harvest sand to fill the bags so they can be used as a retaining wall and thus reduce erosion. However some villagers have started filling the sacks in addition to harvesting the sand so they can hurry along the process. This is a positive local response towards ADRA's initiative—a good start of community-based climate change adaptation and self-restoration.



[ADRA INDONESIA]



Sayur Asem (West Indonesia) Vegetables in tamarind soup

RECIPE

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 liter water | |
| 12pc long beans, cut lengthwise (about 6cm) | ¼ of a cabbage, cubed (cut in squares) |
| 1 chayote (labu siam), peeled and diced | 1 sweet corn, cut in 4-5 pieces |
| 1/4cup Gnetum gnemon fruits
(also known as Melinjo fruit or Spanish Joint Fir or Bago) | 1/4cup fresh raw peanuts |

* USE A MIX OF YOUR OWN VEGETABLES BUT LONG BEANS ARE NECESSARY. ALSO, IF YOU CAN'T FIND GNETUM GNEMON FRUITS, YOU CAN MAKE THE RECIPE WITHOUT IT BUT THE FLAVOR WILL BE DIFFERENT.

SPICES:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 red chili | 2 bird's eye chilies |
| 1 tomato, quartered | 4 thin slices galangal |
| 1 candle nut (kemiri/buah keras) | 3 cloves of garlic, sliced |
| 3 salam leaves (Indonesian bay leaf) | 4 belimbing wuluh (bilimbi), halved |
| 1 teaspoonful tamarind paste | Salt and sugar to taste |

* IF BELIMBING WULUH (BILIMBI) IS NOT AVAILABLE, YOU MAY USE TAMARIND BUT INCREASE THE AMOUNT.

DIRECTIONS:

- Boil water using big stock pot and add galangal, salam leaves, tamarind paste and belimbing wuluh.
- Meanwhile, grind the chilies and candlenuts into fine paste using mortar and pestle (cobek).
- Add the paste to the boiling stock, followed by the sliced garlic, chayote (labu siam), fresh peanuts and Gnetum gnemon fruits (buah melinjo).
- Once they are tender, add the cabbage, long beans and tomato.
- Continue to boil over medium fire until all vegetables are cooked.
- Serve immediately with steamed rice

20

[SELLERINA PAKPAHAN]



Veggie Meat Rendang (West Indonesia)

Rendang is one of the most popular dishes of Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia and has gained worldwide recognition. Initially it was served solely at Indonesian ceremonial occasions to honor special guests of the house. It is suitable as a main dish or side dish. Usually the main ingredient is beef, but here vegetable meat is preferable.

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 kg veggie meat | 2 pcs. coconut |
| 14 leaves of lemon, thinly sliced | 3 stalks lemongrass |
| ¼ kg garlic | ¼ kg onion |
| 2 oz. ginger | 2 oz. galangal |
| ½ tsp white pepper powder | 1 tsp coriander |
| 1 nutmeg | 15 pcs. hazelnut |
| ¼ tsp caraway | Salt to taste |

PREPARATION AND COOKING METHOD:

- Grind 2 pieces of coconut and squeeze to make the pure coconut milk (1st coconut milk). Set aside the 1st coconut milk. Add 2 cups of water and squeeze the coconut pieces to get another portion of coconut milk (2nd coconut milk).
- Thinly slice lemon leaves.
- Ground the rest of the spices into a paste.
- Heat a large wok and pour the 2nd coconut milk into the wok followed by all the spices, lemon leaves, and vegetable meat. Add small amount of salt to taste.
- After about 30 minutes of cooking, add the 1st (pure) coconut milk to the mixture and stir slowly and carefully. Continue to stir until all the liquids have evaporated (about 15 minutes). The Veggie Meat Rendang is ready to serve.

NOTE: COOKING RENDANG IS TIME-CONSUMING AND REQUIRES PATIENCE. IT MUST BE COOKED AT PRECISELY THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE UNTIL ALMOST ALL THE LIQUID IS GONE, ALLOWING THE MEAT TO ABSORB THE CONDIMENTS. BECAUSE OF ITS GENEROUS USE OF NUMEROUS SPICES, RENDANG IS KNOWN FOR HAVING A COMPLEX AND UNIQUE TASTE.

[SELLERINA PAKPAHAN]



Klappertaart (East Indonesia)

Klappertaart (coconut tart) is a popular dessert in Manado. Borrowing its name from the Dutch language, this delicious dessert is associated with Manado because it originated from that city. The original version of klappertaart is topped with pili nuts and ground cinnamon. The modified version uses raisins and grated cheddar cheese.

INGREDIENTS:

CUSTARD

125g all-purpose flour	50g powdered milk
175g sugar	4 egg yolks
½ tsp vanilla essence	275ml young coconut water (can be lessened if you want a drier tart)
100g butter/margarine, softened	3c young coconut meat (sliced and boiled in its water for 3 mins.)
¼ tsp salt	1c pili nuts (cashew nuts can be used if pili is not available)
½ c raisins	

MERANGUE FROSTING

4 egg whites	¼ tsp salt	½ tsp cream of tartar	100g sugar (50g is fine)
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TOPPING (ORIGINAL)

Sliced pili nuts (this can be substituted with slivered almonds), raisins, ground cinnamon, grated cheddar cheese (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Pre-heat oven to 325F. Grease a baking pan and set aside.
- Sift all dry ingredients.
- In a large bowl, combine all custard ingredients excluding the young coconut meat, pili nuts, and raisins. Mix well.
- Strain into the pot and cook, stirring continuously over a medium fire until thickened.
- Drop in young coconut meat, pili nuts, and raisins.
- Remove from fire and stir in butter/margarine.
- Pour into greased pan and bake for 30 mins.
- While the custard is in the oven, beat egg whites, cream of tartar, sugar, and salt until stiff.
- Spread on top of custard.
- Sprinkle ground cinnamon; arrange pili nuts/slivered almonds and raisins.
- Top with grated cheddar cheese, if preferred, and then return to the oven. Broil until the top turns golden.

[JOIEDEVI MONCAYO SUMENDAP]

Gail's Story:

Suffering is

DEVOTIONAL

Problems are inevitable elements of our lives. They are synonymous to our existence. How we react to these things will define the lives we live. While we can't stop bad things from happening, suffering is optional. I have learned these things during the early years of my life. I don't know if it sounds like that is good or bad. On one hand it may be good because by realizing this early in life, I can better deal with struggles later. On the other hand, it means that in order to learn this early in life, I've gone through too many storms.

believe it! I was caught in between the fear of losing my mother and hating my father. Only in Mom's hospital room would I find peace and silence.

Everyone was against my father, including myself. We all blamed him for what was happening to Mommy at that time. I don't know who was with him during those days but I sure wasn't. Only after Mommy talked and talked and talked to me with kind and loving words could I begin to get rid of the hatred that consumed me. She reminded me of how wonderful a father he was and had been to us. What a Christian example of forgiveness she gave me! It took time but eventually, I could feel love for Papa again. I began to see what he was going through now with Mom so sick and everyone hating him. He had been an elder in our island church before but now, because of everything and other reasons I don't know, he stopped going to church. So, I would cry with him and began to defend him to the rest of the family even though they couldn't understand why I would do that.

Mommy stayed in the hospital for a little more than two months. She went through the usual radiation and chemotherapy sessions. Things were getting a little better with Mommy's regular visits to the hospital, and we began slowly moving on with our lives...and then life changed again.

On December 23, 2001, with Mommy fresh from her last chemotherapy session, we headed off to our home island to spend the holidays with the rest of the family. We rented a small boat called a "pump boat" It was a regular December day in that place with waves and not-so-strong winds. I sat down next to my brother on the side of the boat. I'm not really sure now what happened but I probably fell asleep. The next thing I knew, I fell into the water and my right leg was caught by the boat's propeller! There was no pain. I only felt my right leg shaking. Seconds later I was struggling to stay afloat amidst the big waves. I don't know how long it took before they realized I was missing and swung the boat around to look for me. Blood was spilling all over me and mixed with the water; I turned my head this way and gagged as the waves and blood splashed into

Memories of my childhood still remain clear in my mind even after two decades. I grew up in a small island in North Cebu and lived the simplest life imaginable. Those were times filled with happy Sabbath days, games under sunny skies, baths in sparkling blue seas, walks in white sands, and fun and laughter under the rain. Yes, it was as idyllic as it sounds. Happiness back then was never a choice I had to make for each day overflowed with fulfilled promises of it. I was living with the best family in town, loved by the greatest grandparents, aunts, and uncles. If growing up was only optional, I'd choose to be that same child forever.

I was nine years old when my island life ended and my family moved to the city and those carefree days were left behind. Mom was invited to teach at Cebu City SDA Elementary School while my father continued his existing job. He was an auditor for a company, traveling from one place to another in the Philippines so I barely saw him at home. But Mommy was always there every single day. Aside from being a mother, she was my best teacher and my shopping buddy. I was her cooking and baking assistant. At times she can really strict, but most days she was just funny. She was our playmate; she was my best friend.

The years passed and I became a teenager. Then life changed again when I was 14 years old; Mom was diagnosed with lung cancer stage 3. While Mommy was in the hospital, I remember waking up to a morning with people shouting at each other. Everything seemed to be in chaos. Words, words and more angry words. I couldn't understand it all until they said Papa had been involved with some other girl. I couldn't

22

Optional

23

my mouth. I can't remember feeling any pain, but I clearly heard my mother talking to me, asking me not to fall asleep and telling me to hang on.

We raced back to the mainland, got first aid from a clinic, and stopped by a hospital to get a blood transfusion as I was already running out of blood. It was around 12 am when we arrived at Miller hospital, now Adventist Medical Center- Cebu. We requested a doctor who was a family friend to care for me and he scheduled my operation for later in the morning at 8:00 a.m. The operation lasted for 15 hours. I came out of the operating room on Christmas day 2001 when everybody else was enjoying "Noche Buena". We were told later by another doctor how critical the lost 8 hours were. Those were 8 golden hours for injured veins to recover.

Later on, the doctor explained what happened to my right leg. It was like chopped meat in a market, according to him. All the major veins were cut except that the bone was intact. He explained how hard they tried to save my leg but in the middle of the surgery, he realized that he couldn't complete the operation, so he called another doctor to do it. I was in the ICU for a day or two but the leg was not improving at all. The pain was just unbearable! I recall singing myself to sleep just to forget the pain.

On the fourth day, my parents made the difficult decision to sign a waiver for the amputation of my right leg. Before that, they talked to me about the amputation, I really didn't care! I only wanted the pain out. It was only afterward when it was too late did I realize that my life was forever changed. I was only 15, a teenager who was no longer like other teenagers and would never be again. How could things get any harder?

Five months after my accident, I learned just how much harder life in this sinful world could be. In the morning of May 31, 2002, after Mommy has showered and had her breakfast, she said to my grandma, "Ma, matulog nako" (Ma, I'll go to sleep now.) And so she did. That morning, at only 38 years old, she peacefully went to sleep in Jesus.

I may have already enduring the excruciating pain of losing a leg, but the pain of losing a mother was beyond compare. I felt betrayed. I had questions. I had been asking God for five years, just five more years to be with mommy so I could grow up before she left me. Was it too much for a

struggling 15 year old girl to ask? I couldn't think of anything worse than what was happening to us back then.

With a strength that could only come from God, we somehow managed to move on. Coping with my disability was no easy task. I became shy and shunned people. I didn't want to go out. I never wanted to be seen by anyone. I continued my final year in high school through a distance learning school because the idea of going back to a regular school was unbearable. Even though it was more expensive than the regular school, Papa gave in to my request.

After earning my high school diploma, I knew I had to move on to college. By then, I had decided I didn't want to do it through a distance learning program. I missed the regular classroom. I missed having classmate friends. As usual, my father was very supportive. Walking on two crutches and my remaining good leg, I head to college at the University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu. Yes, it was difficult, so very difficult. Every day was an obstacle I needed to surmount. Every day was a stairway I so badly needed to climb. But I kept going. Quitting school never crossed my mind. Despite my situation, I enjoyed my college years. I was surrounded with good people and good friends.

My family was with me each step of the way. It was always difficult but Papa and my siblings made it all a lot easier for me. They never lost faith in me. In spite of the challenges of my special needs at that time, they found ways to meet the challenges. With their unfailing love and support, I worked harder and studied harder. I wanted to show to the world that no disability could stop me from doing something. After 4.5 years, I was wearing a cap and gown with a medal of recognition and how proud my family was!

I went on to do the review for the CPA Board. And once again, life changed..in a very good way. During this time, with the help of an uncle, we were able to buy the prosthetic leg for which we had been saving up for years. What a change! It made my life a little more normal and I was starting to enjoy life again. I came out of the review school six months later as a Certified Public Accountant. The joy of seeing Papa so happy and proud

was just priceless.

After this, I worked for two or three organizations. Most recently, I was a tax examiner for the city government of Cebu and I never thought that I would be leaving home again. Then I was invited to work here in the General Conference Auditing Service based at the Southern Asia-Pacific Division office. The decision to move here has been difficult. Leaving behind family and friends and the comforts of home was the last thing I wanted. But I had been praying for a long time that God would help me live a life close to Him, and I couldn't say no to this answered prayer.

Now, I am grateful for how everything turned out. With all of Papa's hard work and God's help and guidance, my siblings and I have all finished college. My father has found a new love and now we have an adorable 3-year old brother who's been a joy to all of us. Indeed, all things work together for good.

I have realized that despite all the struggles that we've had, God was always there. I know He never left us. Even during those times when I questioned Him. Even when I doubted Him. No matter what, He still cared. I am thankful to God for in the most difficult journey of my life, He gave me a wonderful family who walked with me all the way.

Indeed, God will never allow anything to come to our lives without setting up and clearing the way for us. I had a difficult time trying to understand God's ways and had lots of questions. But unlike before, I now have faith that He has plans - yes, BIG plans - for me.

The scars will forever be a reminder of the difficult days in the past. The challenges will never be over. I still face them every day and I will still be surmounting obstacles every waking day of my life. But I will never quit. I won't ever give up. I may have been through the toughest storms earlier in my life but the good news is what I tell myself over and over on the hard days: "I have the toughest God. And not a problem will ever seem to be too big for me and my tough God to handle."

[GAIL IS CURRENTLY AN AUDIT STAFF FOR GCAS REGION F-TRANS ASIA PACIFIC BASED IN THE SSD OFFICE]



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