



Christmas in Indonesia

Asia's tallest Christmas tree is found on a church property at Pematangsiantar, Sumatra. It is the pride and joy of the local Christians. However, many Christian families there cannot afford to buy a Christmas tree and no one cuts down a good tree, just for Christmas. Money is a huge worry for many Indonesian families, especially at Christmas time when they too would love to have the privilege of at least being able to spend just a little on a new dress, or something. But...

Mery Situmorang, 26, has other worries. As a church school teacher she earns very little, in fact less than \$60 a month. She wouldn't survive if it wasn't for the fact that she lives at home with her parents. She just had a traffic accident – and now has a debt of at least \$300 because of medical and hospital expenses incurred. She doesn't know how to find the money.

Rupinawaty Gurusinga, 30, writes; "My family never has a Christmas tree. We don't even have special food for Christmas and New Year. I just buy some cookies for guests and for my brothers and sisters. We have no furniture in my house in the village, just some flowers which I bought in Medan. We are always thankful that we still have a small house that can protect us from rain and sunburn."

Alfine Sitorus, 26, a qualified teacher, has to spend Christmas in the jungle, cut off from everyone. No school had the money to employ her so the only work she could find was in a remote forest settlement as an office worker, far away from anywhere. "I feel alone, sad; I cry. I am cut off from the rest of the world, no phone, no email, no mail service, no SMS. In the jungle there are many problems. The police came and put my boss (a good man, she says) into jail. They broke my cupboard and stole some other things. They had a bad attitude. Now my boss is sick in jail. We always pray to God. Please pray for us. Please help me to face my problems." (Ed: Don't compare Indonesian police with our police!). Alfine can only leave the jungle to visit her parents (8hr trip) for three days in eight months. Alone in a camp with mainly timber workers, her Christmas will be a tearful one. "I have to stay here," she said on one of

those precious days off. "Because I don't want to be unemployed."

Mery, Rupina and Alfine are part of a small, educated minority. What future does the rest of the population have if they don't even get this much of a chance?



Pastor August Fricke addresses staff at a Lutheran School in Medan, Sumatra with Mery Situmorang as translator

ASIA FOCUS Objectives

- To promote world mission throughout the Lutheran Church and beyond so that it receives regular and prominent attention.
- To give full support to the mission program of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA).
- To encourage and help facilitate additional parish-based overseas mission initiatives.
- To invite support for ASIA FOCUS mission and humanitarian relief projects.

ASIA FOCUS is a free publication distributed bi-monthly. Multiple copies are available on request. Please see back cover for contact details. Funds should never be diverted from the LCA in favour of other causes.

A Tale of Three Countries

AUSTRALIA: New figures just released by the government have shown that Australians are now richer than ever before thanks to a buoyant share market and high house prices. Private wealth rose 18% to a new record of \$5 trillion in the last financial year, or \$250 000 a head, while debt averaged just \$19 000 a head.

Wealth doubled in the past seven years and rose almost 120% in the past decade, beating the record set in the late 1980s. According to CommSec chief equities analyst Craig James, the gains in wealth over the past decade have not been equalled in at least 40 years. And Mr Peter Costello just announced the lowest unemployment rate for 27 years – 5.2%.

Source: AAP/Gympie Times

CAMBODIA: Writes Nida, a young executive in Phnom Penh. "The economic development here is very slow and poverty is on the increase. In 1999, 36% of the people lived below the poverty line, now it's 42%. It's hard to make a living. We earn less while having to spend more. Everything is expensive. There is no relationship between the standard of living of the rich and the poor. As our proverb says, 'Rich up to the sky, and poor under the ground.'

I don't care about our politicians. It hurts too much to think about it. The government has no idea of how to manage the country. They don't even love their own people. They only think about their own pockets. Poor Cambodia."

Official figures confirm this. Infant mortality too is rising and literacy levels are declining. Poor Cambodia!

Nida's mother, Sovya, who works for Lutheran World Service, lives with her husband Phanna in a small room in a 'Street Children's Centre' with 100 kids running around day and night. "The economy is getting worse," she writes, "even food is getting expensive." For years they have been trying to build a small house for themselves, so that they can live and retire somewhere, but they still don't have enough money for it.

CHINA: "Some days, looking past the new gleaming apartment blocks and ritzy shopping malls," writes Catherine Armitage in The Australian Newspaper (22-11-04), "China looks like a mountain of human misery. There are tens of millions of migrant workers who flood into the cities in search of work to be either underpaid or not paid at all. There are the child beggars and petitioners who travel to Beijing from all over the

country seeking to have their complaints heard by the central complaints office but regularly, brutally, are rounded up by police and sent home. At the bottom of the misery mountain are the rural peasantry: powerless, isolated and at the mercy of local party operatives."

Since 1993 China has sent more than 1.2 million people to labour camps (in 2003, 310 000 alone – a huge increase) and last year alone executed 18,000 people for things like theft and tax fraud, often only hours after sentencing, again a steep rise from previous years.

CONCLUSION: In regards to church growth, China and Cambodia probably have the fastest church growth rate in Asia while Christianity in Australia is stagnant, tired and lazy. Now we know the conditions under which Christianity flourishes and under which it declines.

No Church an Island

Have you never belonged to an independent church? I hope not because there is none. In the body of Christ there is no independence, nor are there distances, regions or races. I belong to everyone and everyone belongs to me. Continually I give, share and receive.

If your congregation lives for itself, or even puts its own interests first, it's on life support and may die. A Christian's chief concern in life is: How can I help others? Who is struggling and which church needs my help? Who is in need of what and where? In the body of Christ, geography accounts for little.

Life in The Body is all about INTER-DEPENDENCE. I strongly believe that the Asian Churches can offer us a vital ministry, the testimony of faith, prayer, trust, especially under pressure. That's how they have ministered to many of us who have come to know them. Conversely, I believe that we as a singularly rich country have a twofold mission to Asia and the rest of the developing world: 1. to simply share with them our riches, our money, our expertise and not just give them from our surplus, 2. to break down barriers of ignorance and prejudice and to build many bridges across the waters, often in new, direct and personal ways, particularly at this time in history. Unless we truly share and give like true brothers and sisters and get away from tokenism, in view of huge needs overseas, we sin grievously. Surely, from God's point of view, our prosperity is meant to be their opportunity, maybe their only chance. Clearly shocked, one Batak pastor on seeing what we have, could only say, "Your money is amazing to us."

LCA Pastors becoming Insular?

It would be absolutely tragic if at this time of shrinking distances, cheap overseas travel, and the communication revolution through the internet, we in the LCA were to become insular and self-focused. We would deny ourselves untold blessings.

Alarm bells rang when a brother told me, "I think even our pastors have become insular in their approach to 'mission'. They envisage 'mission' as something on their doorstep only, or someone who walks into their church or church school in Australia." May this spirit may never gain ground in our congregations! For mission, by definition, is world wide.

The church's mission jumped ethnic and language boundaries from the beginning - on Pentecost Day around 30AD. Within one generation the Gospel had nearly reached "the ends of the earth", as understood at the time. It was this boundless mission spirit that gave the early church its dynamism and vitality.

Ours is the Asia Pacific region. One immensely rich country by the name of Australia borders a region with abundant poverty and great human misery. Here in our own neighbourhood struggling churches are daily under pressure. How can we ignore their calls for help? How can we keep living on 'prosperity island' Australia without giving and sacrificing in a new and bold way?

MALAYSIA

Chandran, my Brother

Personal reflections by PASTOR NATHAN HEDT, Nambour, Qld, on his time with the Lutheran Church of Malaysia

My family and I had the privilege of travelling to Malaysia and living there for five months in 2002, as Volunteers in Mission Overseas (VIMO), sponsored by the Mission board of the LCA.

A couple of days after we arrived we were at the very end of our tether. The heat and humidity oppressed us. We had no phone, no car, and knew almost nobody. For us poor un-acclimatised souls, it was just too hot to go outside and we had no way of getting around. All our supports had been taken away. Yvette and I came to the point of tears, realising that we had nothing to lean on except God. As we poured our hearts out to God, we received a measure of his peace.

That same afternoon, God answered our prayers by sending us the local Lutheran pastor and his

wife and family. Somehow Chandran and I hit it off immediately. Yvette and Lilly (Chandran's wife) got on famously too. And our children enjoyed playing with Seraj and Evelina, Chandran's son and daughter.

Have you ever had that experience of instant connection with someone? Have you ever found a soul mate, someone you can talk to about all kinds of things, as if you've known them for years? Chandran became like a brother to me. And, praise God, they lived just around the corner - only about 5 minutes' heat-stressed Malaysian shuffle from our house.

Chandran had grown up with a Christian mother and a Hindu father. His father had not been a priest, but a man who had donated much money to a local Hindu temple to help in its building.

After his Father died, Chandran went into his room, and looked at all the idols of his Hindu gods. He had a crisis of belief. 'None of you are real!' he said to the idols. He realised he couldn't believe in Hinduism any more. Eventually, through the prayers of his mother, both he and his brothers became Christians. Later, he told his mother that he believed God was calling him to study to be a pastor. She said 'At last you've got the message! I've been praying for this day for years!'

So now Chandran is a pastor of the ethically Indian-based ELCM (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia). As I write, he and his family are preparing to move to Sabah (East Malaysia), so Chandran can study for a Master's degree in theology. Please pray for him and his family as they take this difficult step - financially and culturally. It's not easy to uproot and move to a new situation to follow God's call.

To us they were wonderful examples of generosity - they would regularly invite us around for afternoon tea. In Malaysia if you're not eating, you're thinking of where you can eat, or else you're preparing to eat or recovering from eating! Chandran and Lily were also wonderful examples of the truth that the body of Christ transcends cultural and racial barriers. They were to us the face of Christ in a difficult situation. They became such close friends to us. And Chandran became my brother.

We share a common belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We share a common baptism into the Triune name. We share a deep appreciation of Lutheran theology with its emphasis on the free grace of God. We shared wonderful food together. We shared a similar sense of humour. We shared one or two almost sleepless nights discussing 'Life, the universe and everything.'

Most of all, through Chandran and Lilly and our Malaysian experience, we learned some of the depth of wonder that can only be experienced

when you know that people of a different culture and language have been thrown together by the grace of God. As we read in the verses of Revelation,

'They sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God *from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, And they will reign on the earth.'* (Rev 5:9-10)

Although our Malaysian experience wasn't always easy, we praise God that through it we had a taste of heaven – just a taste – in that we discovered that the Lamb has purchased people from *every* tribe, *every* language, *every* people, and *every* nation. What a privilege! I praise God for the Christians in Malaysia, and for Chandran, my brother.

ASIA FOCUS Projects

August – December 2004

Starting from nothing earlier in the year, ASIA FOCUS has received in the vicinity of \$10000 in donations during 2004. Support has come from 'everywhere', particularly South Australia. Donors will in due course receive more details on their investment in love, through money. To the best of information available, no dollar has been diverted from the LCA's vitally important official mission program. It is also hoped that our Mission Office in Adelaide is upbeat and in positive territory, and that we have turned the corner in the long decline in mission giving. For a real renewal in the mission spirit, however, basic structural reform is still required.

Through money we spread love and light and give hope and encouragement. In this spirit ASIA FOCUS was able to work for God in the last few months in the following manner:

1. Giving a Sunday School a helping hand

It is an emotional experience to be an observer at a Sunday School class in progress in a private home. This class is associated with one of Medan's large Batak churches (four services weekly attended by 2500 or more in total). There are no visual aids, no manuals, no books, no pencils etc – just singing and Bible stories read, discussed and enacted. The kids enjoy it. There was one big surprise: Every child brought a Bible along and took its turn in reading some verses.

The teachers indicated that they would love to buy a couple guitars, a keyboard and some other equipment for their Sunday School if ASIA FOCUS

could assist them. \$500 was sent and spent in this way.



Happy Batak children after Sunday School in a home on Friday night

2. Ida Rosari Siagan – ministry to the blind

Ida was a bright, personable student at the Blind School of the GKPI Church, supported by the LCA. Last year she had won an essay competition on the topic, "Does my life have to be hopeless?" At the prompting of Rev Abdul Hutauruk, the director, ASIA FOCUS has now provided her with a scholarship for full time theological study, at least for the first year. The total cost to us for the first year is \$1100.

Our church has always supported both male and female theological students overseas and still does. Ida now studies at Abdi Sabda Seminary, Medan. To serve God full time is her dream, her calling, she says. In due course, she could become a pioneer in bringing the Gospel to the blind of her country. There is no blind Lutheran pastor or evangelist working among Indonesia's 1.4 million blind or near-blind people - a shocking statistic condemning *us* because most blindness is poverty related.

Ida had a terrible time this year settling into a normal seminary. "At the beginning, I thought that I would not make it. I felt hopeless. At the time I always cried to express my feeling. But suddenly I remembered God. I am so silly. Why do I not remember that God can help me? I believe that nothing is impossible for God."

PS. Would someone care to write to Ida please? That would encourage her...

3. Remote Area Evangelist Support in Jambi

Jambi in central Sumatra is a challenging frontier ministry. The existence of congregations is threatened nearly daily. In contrast to some other

parts of Sumatra, here Christians make up only 2% of the population and is doing it tough. No church can identify itself as a church by using Christian symbols, such as the cross. That would be suicidal.

We have established a great friendship with the leading GKPI pastor (Lutheran) of the region, Dr A Nainggolan. He wants to bring the Gospel to isolated and so far un-reached people, at great danger to himself. For that task, he trains Christians from remote areas as evangelists to go back home later to witness for Christ in their own communities. "But they are poor," writes Dr Nainggolan, "We have so few books these evangelists can read. As well, our library is so small."

To equip future missionaries for their work, ASIA FOCUS has so far contributed \$700 for the purchase of books, the tools of the trade. "65% will go to the 15 students and 35% to our library," wrote the pastor. Note that our dollars buy a lot more over there than they do here. But I think we should do a lot more.

4. Supporting a Struggling Christian School

Medan, a metropolis and home of nearly 2 million Indonesian Christians facing sustained discrimination, is also the home of numerous Christian institutions, including a school our church is associated with. It is one of the poorest schools I have ever seen. The library consists of only a couple of cupboards full of cheapish, mostly old books and magazines. The geography teacher didn't even have a map of Australia or much of anything else for that matter. So ASIA FOCUS sent \$1000 to the school. \$500 was used to improve the library and \$500 was split up among the school's 25 staff (22 teachers and three other employees) as a small present to them for Christmas. This means that every staff member received a Christmas bonus of \$20 per person. In Australia this would be an insult.

The spirit of some of the teachers is unconquerable, to me, overwhelming! Melva Barus, English teacher, gets \$80 per month for 30 hours of work at the school each week. She knows she could earn much more money if she worked for a private company as a translator but writes, "Of course, our wages are not enough but I really like to be a teacher. I believe that God has called me to be a teacher. My vision for our beloved school is to make it one of the best schools in Medan and for that school to become a witness to Jesus Christ, to be salt and light in our society. I try to give my best to all my students even though it's very hard for me."

Doesn't this move your heart? Do we have such a spirit in our own, rich schools in Australia?



Melva Barus introducing the school library

5. Evangelising a Hill Tribe in North Thailand

The Gospel is making tremendous progress in the mountains of Northern Thailand among some 6000 un-evangelised people, the Luas, with more and more of them being baptised and confessing Christ. See ASIA FOCUS, Oct. 2004. Now, for the first time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thailand (ELCT) has sent to the region a full time, permanently stationed evangelist – **Mr Tawee Boonrasee**. ASIA FOCUS has agreed to sponsor him at around \$2500 for 2005. Because the resources of the ELCT are very meagre, ASIA FOCUS is also trying to find the money for the support of a second evangelist to be sent out by April or May 2005. We hope to establish a good relationship with both of these two men and should receive regular updates.



Bishop Visanukorn Upama, head of the Thai Church, formerly a Buddhist monk, presents a donation from ASIA FOCUS to the Lua people

Profile of Tawee Boonrasee

The Thai Evangelist to be on the payroll of ASIA FOCUS

Age: 47
Marital status: Single
Marriage arrangements made for May 2005

Education: Bachelor of Theology, Lutheran Institute of Theological Education (LITE), Bangkok Thailand.

Tawee Boonrasee was born into a Buddhist family and brought up with Buddhist teachings. This caused him to love his religion and to be very protective of it. When the Good News of Jesus was shared in his village, Tawee expressed his love for his religion by opposing the teachings of Jesus. Later, after he had finally come to faith in Christ, he began to witness and evangelise in his village. Many became interested as they saw the changes that had taken place in Tawee's life and later they too came to believe in Jesus.

Eventually Tawee studied at the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education (LITE) in Bangkok. After completion of studies he has already served God in a number of different places.

Tawee is a hardworking and persevering man. He is gifted in the areas of composing songs and singing. He goes out to evangelise every day and also visits members in their homes.

6. Christian Literature Mission in a Muslim land

The focus is on Indonesia, especially Sumatra, an island with some 6 million Christians, most of them of our own tradition. Here ASIA FOCUS is involved with three projects:

- (a) Making Lutheran-based Christian tracts from the LLL Tract Mission, Adelaide, available at a number of outlets. Particularly the young people have a great interest in and desire for reading in English.
- (b) Supporting the setting up of a library, something in progress now in Medan, to help many hundreds of young people grow in The Faith and the love of God.
- (c) Enabling Rev M Simorangkir, post graduate student with the Australian Lutheran College (ALC) but living in Medan, to print and publish his first 16-page tract on Holy Communion in the Indonesian language

(and maybe a little later one on Justification by Faith Alone). HC is a subject even the 'Lutheran' Churches there seem to have little understanding of.

These three projects have cost ASIA FOCUS \$2600 in the last few months.

As to further causes and needs, see the next issue of ASIA FOCUS.

Letter from Indonesia

Why we need Lutheran based Gospel Literature right throughout Indonesia

Rev Mangisi Simorangkir, Sumatra

The aim of my tract publications, with ASIA FOCUS support, is to introduce Lutheran theology into Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra where many Lutheran people live. I hope that people will be able to understand the content of Lutheran theology step by step.

The publication of the Book of Concord in Indonesian in September 2004 that I translated (*Ed: thanks to an LCA initiative*); can serve the aim stated above. As you know, there are about 5 million Lutheran people in Indonesia but the theology here is dominated by Calvinism. Maybe that is because of the long period of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.

The tracts in English sent to us by ASIA FOCUS are very useful because people here become more and more eager to read in English. That is because of globalism, the internet etc. Small 'books' like tracts are 'easy reading', not too academic. Indonesian people generally do not or cannot read heavy literature.

7. Part Sponsorship of Luther Saogo, Mentawai Islands

The Mentawai Islands off Sumatra are incredibly poor, backward and isolated. Most people here are Christians, mostly Lutheran, about 40000 in number. The locals feel that they are being neglected by Jakarta because of their non-Muslim faith. The islands will never progress unless their brightest young people get an education away from home, where there is nothing. The idea is for them to return home later on to become church and community leaders.

Based on a submission from the local church, the LCA has been kind enough to sponsor two of their bright young people at \$1500 per student p/a. One of them is a male law student, the other a

female theology student. However, there is also LUTHER SAOGO, a gifted and dedicated youth leader and musician, who, with the other two, has also been sent now to a good college in Java in order to study music. Because the Mentawai Church has just no money, ASIA FOCUS has been persuaded to contribute to the cost of Luther's education. We have contributed \$800 and may be able to do more later in 2005. More on Mentawai etc in coming issues of ASIA FOCUS.

PS. Quote from letter, "Last week Luther's mother brought us a chicken to eat, as a thank you. Actually it was for you too, August..."



Luther Saogo, second from left, of the Mentawai Islands, with his family

14 Churches in Java Closed Down

"The Government has closed down 14 churches in West Java earlier this year (2004). I believe that the local Muslims organized demonstrations against the churches. Stones were thrown. They didn't like the Christians." *Source withheld.*

"No More Terrorists in Indonesia"

"13 out of the 14 ministries in the new government of Indonesia have gone to the fundamentalists, that is, to the terrorist side," said former President of Indonesia ABDURRAHMAN WAHID (1999-2001) in Canberra on December 10th 2004 on Radio National, "So we are saying that there are no more terrorists in our country because they are ministers now." As an educated, wise and moderate Muslim leader, he repeatedly called the Indonesian Supreme Court a "Mafia Court". He also made the thought-provoking comment that the real issue is not terrorism but poverty and injustice, the source of terrorism.

An Australian Story: "Are you God?"

It was a Sunday after church in October 2004. Still looking official in my gown, I shook hands with worshippers. All of a sudden two arms embraced

my legs lovingly and a little girl by the name of Alannah, 7, who didn't know me well, looked up into my face and asked, "Are you God?" I answered, "Not really." "Then are you Jesus?" "Sorry, sweetheart, not really." "Who are you then?" I know I didn't answer well. She had me stumped. On reflection, should not young and old see God and Jesus in us all?

Australian Government Money for Muslim, not Christian Schools in Indonesia

A scandal seems to be emerging. While large sums of money flow into Indonesia from Australia, the USA and Europe to prop up government and Muslim schools, in an attempt to counteract extremist influences, the struggling Christian schools are forgotten. Will our Schools Department get busy to plead the cause for our surviving Christian Schools in Indonesia?

Pastors of the dead people?

Maya Manurung, a Lutheran lawyer in Sumatra, Indonesia spent some time in Gympie earlier this year receiving training and experience in Australian law practices (made possible through the generosity of three people including a Catholic undertaker and law firm). I showed her around 'our' crematorium and mentioned that I was about to conduct a service for someone who hadn't gone to church. Noticing that most Australians say that they are Christians but do anything but go to church, she said, "It seems that in Australia only dead people need a pastor." Later Maya spoke at Rotary and said, "I want to make Australians wake up from sleep."

Whatever you do will be insignificant but it is important that you do it. Mahatma Ghandi

Small acts, when multiplied by millions, can transform the world. Howard Zinn

Airlines bleed because we're fatter

The weight of the average American increased by 4.5kg from 1991 - 2000. This meant for example, that the US carriers had to carry an extra 1.4 billion litres of fuel in the year 2000 alone. This meant an extra expenditure item of \$275 million for US carriers by comparison to 10 years earlier. Is this one reason why the US airline industry is on life support? How about slim passengers getting a discount?

Source: In the National Interest, Radio National, 7-11-2004

Lutheran Presence in Cambodia

Lutheran mission has "short legs", as a Korean pastor once said. For example, there is no Lutheran Church in Cambodia. However, there is some good news; Luther's Small Catechism (LSC) has just been translated into Khmer, the Cambodian language, and has been available since the 10th October 2004. In the same month the Missouri Synod orientated but independent Lutheran Institute - South East Asia (LISA) conducted a seminar in Phnom Penh for 41 local Cambodian church leaders on how to use LSC in parish life. Now more mainstream Lutheran groups are also getting more active.

College Students visit LWS Cambodia

Eight students and two staff of Redeemer Lutheran College, Rochedale Qld, have just returned from Cambodia where they helped to complete a project for Lutheran World Service. On top of covering their own expenses, excursion members had raised nearly \$11000 for LWS-Cambodia during 2004. For two weeks they all worked as labourers under the guidance of Cambodian tradesmen while also teaching English.

ASIA FOCUS MISSION TRIP 2005

A mid year Mission trip is definitely on the agenda and details should be finalised by February. Please check our website for regular updates. Decisions will be made shortly. A two to three week trip is planned for about 10 people to fly to Phnom Penh, to initiate, complete or at least participate in a project in Cambodia, then go overland to Bangkok and fly home from there. Estimated cost per person is \$2000 including air ticket. A donation of \$500 p/p for a particular project is required (may be raised in various ways.) Then we have some \$5000 to spend on a project either in association with LWF Cambodia, World Vision Cambodia or an independent local church. The interest so far is great. Please be patient but get in touch if interested.

Website

Our website www.asiafocus.org.au is now up and running. Please check out our home on the web, get the latest updates or participate in the ASIA FOCUS online forum. Note that there is material published on the web that will never see the light of day in print!

Editorial Comment

So far most LCA pastors and other people have received the latest issue of ASIA FOCUS publication. It may be ordered any time free of charge, and multiple printed copies are available on request, without obligation whatsoever, but please return the RESPONSE FORM. If not

interested please let us know! You may quote or copy articles from ASIA FOCUS but always acknowledge the source please.

SISTER CONGREGATION

Is there a congregation in the LCA that would like to correspond with a congregation in the Jambi district of Sumatra, Indonesia and possibly become its **sister congregation**? This would be a challenge, and could be a great blessing to all parties, but of course there are pitfalls too. For more details please contact the editor.

ASIA FOCUS Mission Statement

- **ASIA FOCUS** wishes to be a source of information on the church in the world, especially the Lutheran Church in our Asian neighbourhood.
- **ASIA FOCUS** wishes to encourage congregations, parishes and individuals to take a keen interest in aid and mission projects and consider developing their own initiatives in consultation with the LCA.
- **ASIA FOCUS** invites prayer and financial support for official LCA mission endeavours as well as its own projects to counter the decline in mission support in recent years.

Current ASIA FOCUS projects:

- Various Indonesian literature initiatives (library establishment, publication and distribution of important Gospel tracts).
- Sponsorship of two Thai evangelists to share the Gospel in remote parts of Thailand.
- Training of evangelists in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia.
- Sponsorship of a blind theological student in Medan, Sumatra, Indonesia.
- Financial support for the School and Sunday School of the GKPI Lutheran Church in Padang Bulan, Sumatra, Indonesia.
- Sponsorship of a student and support for several other needy people from the Mentawai Islands, Sumatra, Indonesia.
- Several other projects are currently being negotiated.

ASIA FOCUS is a free publication distributed bi-monthly in printed and electronic (PDF) format.

ASIA FOCUS is a 'voice from the parish' encouraging comments, openness and honest dialogue.

Donations go in full to projects supported by ASIA FOCUS. Administration and printing costs are not paid for from donations. Cheques can be made out to '*Asia Mission & Relief Fund*'. Direct deposits and transfers are also welcome.

Bank: Suncorp
Branch: Brisbane
A/C Name: Asia Mission & Relief Fund

BSB#: 484799

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