

*"For ten years we have lived under a dark sky. In the middle of 2009 we began to feel that darkness was lifting."* Leo Marcal.

## Meeting our Neighbours

*Can you name a country which has lost 40,000 of its civilians because they protected Australian soldiers?*

There is only one such place, and that is the tiny nation of Timor Leste. This fact has been described as one of the best kept secrets of WW II.

In 1942, the Japanese armies were sweeping south towards Australia. Fearing invasion, Australia sent 700 troops to the neutral country which was then known as Portuguese Timor. The Timorese befriended and aided our soldiers, and many many of them paid for this help with their own lives. Australia dropped leaflets on the Timorese villages saying "Your friends do not forget you".

A veteran of those times said, "*We went to Timor and brought nothing but misery to those poor people. That is all they ever got out of helping us.... Misery*". -John (Paddy) Kenneally, 2/2nd Independent Company.

After its generosity towards Australia, and the brutality it received from the Japanese, Portuguese Timor had a few years of **relative** peace until 1975, when they were granted independence from Portugal.

Within a few days of this independence, Indonesian soldiers swept across the border brutally overcoming all resistance. This was the period when five Australian journalists were murdered at Balibo, but many thousands of Timorese also lost their lives.

For nearly 25 years Timor Leste resisted their Indonesian

occupiers, then in 1999, the Indonesian government agreed to allow a process of popular consultation which led to an overwhelming vote for restoration of the country's independence.



When the vote was declared, violence broke out in every direction. There was wide-scale looting as truckload after truckload of goods were taken out of the country. Many thousands of Timorese, as they had done on a number of previous occasions, fled their homes for the safety of the hills. As a final act of bitter vengeance departing troops and militia poured diesel into the streets of Dili and set the whole city on fire.

Shortly after that, Australian troops went to Timor Leste as part of a UN Peace Keeping force.

In the sad years from 1975 to 1999, every home and family faced tragic loss. The figures are only known to God, but estimates suggest that between 30-50% of the population died or was displaced!

After further, more localised disruption in 2006, Australian troops were again sent to Timor Leste and they are still there today in what has become a peaceful, safe and idyllic country.

It is difficult for most Australians to fully comprehend the effects of

so many years of disruption. TL has become one of the poorest nations in the world. There is little by way of infrastructure, and many families struggle to provide the basic needs for their families.

In all of this the Church has also been repeatedly smashed. Their leaders were targeted as dissidents, and normal church life has been nearly impossible.

In August 2008, there arose out of the battered remnant of the Protestant Church, a new denomination which determined to be Evangelical, Reformed and Presbyterian. They have hence named themselves the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste.

It is **THIS** church which we are now seeking to support and encourage.

The task ahead is enormous. What does the church there need? – Almost anything you can think of – Bibles, food, transport, education for children and for pastors, repair for Church buildings – and on and on it goes.

**Where:** 640km NE of Darwin.

A Country with many **names:**

East Timor, Timor Leste (this is the name designated to be the common name by the TL govt.), Timor Lorosa'e, Timor Timur, Portuguese Timor, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (official).

**Land Area** 150,000 km<sup>2</sup>. (Twice the size of Tasmania).

**Population:** 1.2 Million.

**Population Growth:** 6.8% pa (2<sup>nd</sup> largest in world)

**Religion:** 98% Roman Catholic; 1% Muslim; 1% Protestant.

**GDP /capita:** \$374pa. (Aus \$35,200)

**Unemployment:** 20%

**Language:** 15 local languages. Official languages are Tetum and Portuguese. Working languages are Indonesian and English.

"Bondia Timor Leste" – the name means, "Good Morning East Timor". It is produced by a sub-committee of Mission Partners. The publishers of this newsletter pray that it might be used to awaken interest in the Presbyterian Church which is nearest to Australian shores.

**IF YOU WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO THIS NEWSLETTER, please contact the Editor.**

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It will be a long process, and while we can't do everything we must start to do something.

One of our highest priorities is to work and pray to help the church establish a strong foundation in its thinking and ministry which will sustain it for generations to come.

To that end there will be a small group going to Timor Leste on 30<sup>th</sup> November to hold workshops with

**It is not often that a church gets to help lay the foundation for a whole new denomination, but here there is just such an opportunity.**

the church leaders. The workshops will be centred around the Westminster Confession of Faith, which we hope they may at some time adopt as their own subordinate Standard.

David Burke, Senior Pastor from Orchard Road Presbyterian

Church in Singapore will be the main teacher, and he will be accompanied by elder Roger Bannister from Mt Gambier and

Rob Duncanson, minister at Darwin.

Out of overwhelming hardship a church has been born which wants to see the Kingdom of God progress within their land. They are already seeing remarkable signs of the work of the Holy Spirit among them.

Please pray with us that the Lord would bless them and that they would build a firm Biblical foundation upon which they will grow and bring blessing to the whole of TL and to this region.

## Church Planting TL Style

Our four wheel drive followed along after a truckload of 60 – 70 young people from neighbouring congregations who were singing out the Lord's praise as we travelled towards the congregation of Besusu on the picturesque southern coast of Timor Leste.

Ahead of the truck was our UN escort vehicle. There was no threat to us, but its flashing lights spoke of both the past troubles and the present support for the new congregation in Besusu.



Robert Benn, Gary Ware and the UN escort.

On arrival, after the usual presentation of Tais (traditional scarfs), and the scattering of flower petals before us, we were seated in a temporary shelter erected for the occasion. (the church building was nowhere near big enough for the crowd.)

To everyone's surprise, the congregation, which has about 115 members, was joined for the occasion by the Head of the District, Senyor Antonio Magelains.

In December 2008 the EPC wanted to plant a church in Besusu, and Leo Marcal started to make plans to that end. This brought an immediate reaction

from the local Police and the head of the district, who told them that they were not welcome and should not come to Besusu.

Leo was undeterred, and referred the authorities to the TL Constitution which provides for both the separation of church and State, and for freedom of religion.

In the meantime, the local congregation erected a temporary shelter where they wished to celebrate Christmas together. Seeing this, some of the local Roman Catholic youth destroyed the shelter and threw rocks at the people.

What did the congregation do?

They met at the site and prayed that the Lord would provide for them.

What did the Lord do?

No-one was sure until the day of our meeting. The people had persevered and built a small church out of bush timber and palm stem walls, which within two or three months became hopelessly inadequate for the size of the growing congregation. They met regularly and shared their two copies of the New Testament amongst the believers. There was an ongoing sense of unease and a degree of uncertainty amidst the joy of the new congregation.

We had been surprised to find the District Head at our meeting, but we were thrilled to hear him express his support for this new

EPC congregation, assuring them of his co-operation and help, even inviting them to send someone to teach the Protestant religion to the children in the local school.

The Lord does indeed change the hearts and lives of men!

Some of the young men present had been a part of the wrecking party which had destroyed the shelter

last December. As changed men, they sent their greetings to the brothers and sisters in Australia. They told us how wonderful it would be if they had Bibles (they currently only have two New Testaments which they use on a roster system), and how they would love to have a musical instrument.

What is Church planting in TL like? It is characterised by opposition and lack of resources, but also by vitality, growth and an overflowing love for the Lord Jesus and His people.

## Intro. to Arlindo Marcal

*Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste.*

Rev. Arlindo Marcal is a significant



Timorese public figure who comes from the beautifully fertile Same district. His Christian connections go back to the 1950's when his relatives were among the first Protestants in Timor Leste.

His father was executed by the occupying Indonesian army in 1975, and Arlindo had to flee for his own life in 1999. At that time he went to Canada for refuge, and there met his Canadian wife, Kathryn. They have been blessed with two children.

While in Canada he had the opportunity to address the UN on the plight of his people.

He served as Ambassador for TL in Jakarta for about three years.

Arlindo (and others) strove long and hard to bring about reform within the former Protestant church in TL. For some time he was the Moderator of that church. He sought to bring about financial accountability and to bring about spiritual and pastoral awareness amongst the leadership. When these efforts failed, the Lord used Arlindo's great abilities (along with others) to bring the EPC into existence.

This has brought a new spiritual vitality. He said *"We as pastors are growing as we serve the people. It is a spiritual movement, not just organisational or social. Something really happened IN US!"*

This is seen amongst the people as one man said, *"not long ago the people would come to church for a good sleep. Now they come with enthusiasm! And young people too!"*

## Timothy's Story

(Timotio Nia Istorio)

*"Grandmother began to tell the story: Long, long ago and far, far away, in the land of Israel, in the town of Bethlehem, a baby was born."*

*"Avo fetu komesa konta istoria: Uluk, uluk liu i kleur tebes, iha rai Israel, iha sidade Belem, kosok oan ida moris."*

This is the story (fictional) of Timothy, who asks his grandmother about the Christmas story. The story finishes with the glorious verse found in John 3:16.

Jo McDougall, from the Darwin Presbyterian Church, had never written a book before, but when

she heard of the needs of Timor Leste, she undertook the task with great enthusiasm for the sake of the gospel and the children of TL.

When Robert Benn, Gary Ware and Rob Duncanson visited TL in April 2009, we were able to take some copies with us, and they were received with overwhelming delight – not only by the children who had never seen such a beautiful book in their own language (Tetun) and in English as well, but also by the adults.

The local language of Tetun has only been commonly written down for about 10 years, so literature is VERY rare and enthusiastically devoured.

We hope to take many more copies of the book to TL in time for Christmas this year.

This book was funded by a generous grant from the GAA Christian Education Committee.

Jo has written a second book "The World God Made" which is also in Tetun and English. It was funded by the Seaford Congregation in Victoria.



If you would like to buy a copy of Timothy's Story (and help to provide more free to TL with the proceeds), they are available from Rob

Duncanson for \$6 posted, (address front pg.)

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. **Pray**
2. **Pray**
3. **Pray** (see below for prayer points).
4. **Give**
  - a. \$3800 will buy a motor bike for a pastor.
  - b. \$50 will supply a musical

instrument for local congregation.

- c. \$1000 will help refurbish a dilapidated church building.
- d. \$100 will provide Bibles and Scripture portions.
- e. \$4000 pa will cover the cost of a theological student's studies (3 year course).
- f. \$1000pa will cover the cost of sending a rural student to Dili for TAFE or High-school education.
- g. \$200pa will cover education costs for a student at a local school.

All monies should be sent to Mission Partners in Sydney and clearly marked for Timor Leste. Address below.

Mission Partners will provide a receipt for every payment and the EPC will account to Mission Partners for all gifts they receive.

## PLEASE PRAY

1. For the planned teaching trip Nov 30<sup>th</sup> – December 4<sup>th</sup>.
2. That the EPC-TL will have a firm foundation upon which to build a solid Biblical Church.
3. For the church leaders who serve self-sacrificially for the sake of the gospel work in TL, that the Lord would provide for all their needs.
4. For many folk who are living in poverty.
5. For many Timorese who are showing an interest in the gospel, that they would be encouraged to repent, follow Jesus and that they would then be well disciplined.
6. For those who have inadequate shelter facing the coming Wet Season.
7. For churches which have outgrown their buildings, or whose buildings do not provide adequate shelter for the coming Wet Season.

If you would like to **SUBSCRIBE** to this newsletter (it will come out about 4-6 times per year), please contact the Editor (details front page).

If you would like to **GIVE** towards gospel ministry in Timor Leste, please send donations to Mission Partners, and clearly designate them for this work. Address: 8 Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point NSW 2213.