



Indonesia: Blessed by Courage and Wisdom

BY PASTOR VICTOR ATALLAH



Muslim relatives and neighbours listening to gospel proclamation

Indonesia is often called the largest Muslim nation, but this gives a wrong impression. While a large majority identify as Muslim, most of these barely know enough about Islam to be considered true Muslims. Indonesian folkways prevail, despite the saturation of the country with mosques of different sizes. These are built by generous gifts of oil wealth from the Arabian Gulf. The same wealth finances Indonesian clergymen, but their influence is largely limited to poor, uneducated village communities and remote areas.

Attacks against Christians and church meeting places can happen in these areas. From time to time, there is discrimination and even occasional violence from Islamists inspired by Jihadist ideologies.

Growing Respect

Overall, the Muslim majority is rapidly shrinking, especially in the sprawling urban areas. Many of the educated, the young people and social media users are disenfranchised from Islam. They are becoming irreligious and secularized nominal Muslims, similar

to many of Christian background in the westernized world. Some are positively impacted by the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ is making major inroads culturally, socially and spiritually. In Indonesia Christians are growing in number and enjoying more and more tolerance and respect.

It is heartwarming to fellowship with many first and second generation converts whose lives and convictions are influencing their families, neighbourhoods and work places. Several of MERF's staff in Indonesia comes from converted families. What is amazing is the standing of

these converts among their families, friends and neighbours. In some cases, they command the respect of entire communities. More importantly, their testimonies are bearing much fruit. They are not asked to defend what they believe or to compare it to Muslim beliefs. They simply explain why they became followers of Christ.

Gospel Opportunities

We spent quality time with the extended family of one of MERF's Javanese staff. Her mother and uncle and his wife are all first generation converts. Her



Indonesian believers are eager to learn

“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!”

— Psalm 96:3

father is a second generation convert. Her mother’s sister, who still identifies as Muslim, and some Muslim neighbours helped prepare an elaborate meal for us and then happily sat down to hear my strong and clear gospel message. Other Muslim neighbours warmly waved or shook hands with us, even though they knew well that we came with a gospel message.

The faithful missionary vision and zeal of local churches reaches out creatively to their Muslim communities. In one case, a church started a project enabling poor farmers to learn how to grow dragon fruit, a profitable crop. The men are hosted on a farm while undergoing the training. In the process, with-

out any coercion or pressure, they are exposed to regular Bible reading and gospel messages. Another church started a low cost private school with a clear Christian curriculum. The school allows Muslim families to enroll their children and also hires Muslim staff for non-teaching jobs. Another church started a very small community-service radio station. All are welcome to freely advertise community events and services and the station regularly broadcasts Bible readings, Christian songs and simple gospel messages. When such community building ventures carefully avoid overt or covert remarks critical of Islam, they are blessed by gently bearing gospel fruit.

Bible Teachers Needed

Today there are thousands of Indonesian young people, many recent converts, desiring to grow in biblical understanding. Many seminaries and Bible training institutions have sprung up, mostly financed by well-meaning believers. Yet, a lot of them lack qualified staff and good teaching resources. Thus, they welcome opportunities to receive qualified, sound Bible teachers.

This is a time of golden opportunities for equipping native Indonesians to do faithful work in evangelism and church-planting. The backbone of MERF’s ministries is providing sound and applied biblical

training for national spiritual leaders. There are now two MERF training centres in Indonesia. The one in Makassar (Sulawesi island) is well-equipped and quite active. The newly-opened facility in the capital, Jakarta (Java island) is being expanded to provide intensive 3 to 4 month training programmes for groups of village evangelists. *Currently MERF is seeking a qualified, experienced Bible teacher for the Jakarta centre.* Inquiries and resumes are welcome at: merf@merf.org. Please pray for the Lord’s provision.

3-Minute VIDEO

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International Evangelical Church

Sundays 10:30 am & 6:00 pm – John Calvin Centre 57 Stylianou Lena St., Larnaca, Cyprus



Indonesian Community Radio Station