**Indonesia, Singapore, Australia Jan 2013**

**Jakarta Jan 4-8**

We arrived in Jakarta after traveling for almost 30 hours. We were met by Frankie and Ferlia (Erli) Lumenta and have conversation with Budi Hartano and his wife Listiana. We learned that her granddad was baptized at the age of 100, died at 102 years old. Her mom has also been baptized.

The church we are visiting has between 1700 and 1800 members. The group here is very faithful and believe that God can do just about anything. They have overseen 15 church plantings in the past four years or so. There are now 31 churches in our fellowship throughout Indonesia. Jakarta is a huge city, with a population of a little over ten million in the city itself, but over 25 million in the metropolitan area. At first glance, Jakarta seems very modern. A lot of building has gone on here recently. One sees mosques and minarets everywhere, as the country is principally Muslim. Jakarta is on Java, which is the fifth largest of the 13,000 islands in Indonesia, but. With 130 million plus inhabitants, it has over half the total population of the country. Obviously, Java is a very crowded island. The country is about 85% Muslim. There are significant minorities of Christians, with some areas, such as northern Sulawesi and New Guinea, as well as a couple of small islands and parts of Sumatra having a majority Christian population. There is also a small but significant Buddhist population because of the Chinese minority, as well as Hinduism, which is practiced by the majority of those who live on the small island of Bali. So, although this is the largest Muslim population country in the world, there is a fair amount of diversity. The government is officially secular, but non-Muslims have many disadvantages and, in some cases there is strong persecution.

On Saturday morning we had lunch with two couples; Rico and Ria Stompul, who lead campus, as well as Rebi and Cynthia Walandouw, who lead one of the regions here. Next, we went to the National Museum of Indonesia with Alex and some other disciples. This was a fascinating museum, with artifacts explaining the dozens of different cultures from Sumatra, Java, Kalamintang (Borneo), Bali, Flores, Timor, the Molucu (Moluccas), Sulawesi and Irian Jaya (New Guinea). In the evening we had a great time having dinner with Harliem and Vania, the leaders of the churches in Indonesia in a Japanese restaurant. While there, it seemed that they knew all the customers. They are known by thousands of the most influential leaders in Indonesia. Thanks largely to Harliem and Vania the church here has a wide spread influence in Indonesia.

On Sunday, of course, we are meeting with the church. The service is at 8:00 AM. The auditorium, with a capacity of 1700 was packed, with people sitting on the floor. Jan shared for the Lord’s Supper. John taught a class on the Kingdom of God. The church plans on spending an entire year studying about the Kingdom and putting it into practice, so this lesson is a good kick-off. After church, John did a class on Daniel, Prophet to the Nations. The class was for the leaders, but was made open to the church. About 80% stayed for the extra session, which ended at 12:30. Four and a half hours of church and almost all stayed. Quite impressive. There is a great hunger for God’s word here.

We have lunch with Harliem and Vania. They share some amazing stories of what God has been doing through the church here. They have specifically focused on reaching out to influential Indonesians. This was a very slow process at first. Most conversions took five to seven years of patiently, lovingly reaching out. At first they only had four in this ministry, but now they have about 200 of the very successful and influential people in the church. The wife of the first adviser to the president of Indonesia is a member of the church. Her husband is the chief adviser and mentor to the president. He comes to church often and has shared that only the church could have brought healing to his family. He has built a school for highly qualified students from the poorest of the poor in Indonesia. Harliem has been able to speak to this group many times. The church here has a great number of outreach efforts to the community, including an orphanage, a school for handicapped children, a teacher training program, counseling for parenting and marriages in the community and much, much more. The church has very strong respect in this country, despite being a Christian church in a Muslim country. Four of the top architects in Indonesia are members, as is a top judge, and a businessman who owns 14 hotels. This is just the beginning of the list.. This is not the only effort of the church. Harliem shared that ninety-plus percent of the teens of families in the church get baptized and virtually all of them have been making the transition to the University successfully. The church has a very powerful older adult ministry as well. After a dry time, the campus is doing very well also. There is very strong visionary leadership here. A need is for mature teachers to come here, as the teaching ministry is just getting off the ground.

On Monday I taught four hours on Old Testament survey for the full time staff. There were about 35 at the class. I was interviewed between the classes by a reporter from the only Christian magazine in Indonesia. This was a new experience for me. We had food from JogJakarta for lunch. After this, I left immediately to drive with Sahat and Joyce to the city of Tangerang. Jan stayed behind to get a bit of a rest. Tangerang is a “satellite city” of Jakarta, and the capital of another province. It is about 35 miles from Jakarta and has 5.5 million inhabitants. It is a bustling and growing area with many expatriates. The church here has 230 members and about that many were at the service. I taught on the Kingdom of God. The group here is very encouraged to have a guest speaker. Before the service we had dinner in a Chinese restaurant including weilung kau, which is a black jello. Charles Ham translated here, as in Jakarta. After the lesson there were many questions from the members.

**Ambon Jan 8-9**

On Tuesday we were up at 2:30 AM for a 5:00 flight to Ambon. We travel to Ambon with Freddie and Ferlia, with a stop in Surabaya. Ambon is nearly 1500 miles east of Jakarta. It is hard to get used to the great distances here in Indonesia.

Ambon is a small island—perhaps a bit more than ten miles long. It is very tropical here. The island is extremely mountainous, so the 300,000+ inhabitants are squeezed tightly together. Ambon was the first capital of the Portuguese East Indies. It is in the Maluku (Molucca or Spice) Islands. The Portuguese came here in 1512. In 1605 the Dutch kicked the Portuguese out and began their almost 350 years of ruling the Dutch East Indies, which became Indonesia. They chose Ambon because it is in the middle of the Spice Islands, with the valuable cloves, pepper and nutmeg, and because it have a large and deep harbor.

Arif and Diha picked us up at airport. It is really beautiful here. We have to cross the harbor in a ferry to reach the city. On the way we pass dozens of burned out houses and churches. In 1998 there were horrible riots between Muslims and Christians. Atrocities were done on both sides, but the instigators were Muslim radicals. They destroyed whole sections of the “Christian” city, occupied them, and have built houses and mosques on the stolen land. Frankie and his mother both lost houses in the riots. There is a tense peace now, but the Christians have lost much of their power and influence.

The church we are visiting here was planted two years ago, with seven missionaries coming here. Now they are 44 members, which is very encouraging growth. We feel so welcomed by the church here. The group is led by Angora and his wife Inneke. We visited a museum of local history and had a wonderful dinner of sea food right on the water. It was very beautiful. Tomorrow I will give two presentations—one at the university and the other for the church.

We are up early again today because the talk at the university is at 9:00. We met Reza who is an extremely successful businessman. He was converted by Harliem and Vania and is now doing work all over Indonesia, encouraging the churches, starting programs to help the poor people of Maluku, running businesses and much more. He is a very humble man and has many friends in high places in the government. I am teaching at Pattimura University, which is a Christian university. It is named after the local hero who defeated the Dutch. I spend time with the vice rector (vice president) of the University, as well as Hanrak who is running for vice governor of Moluccu. Hanrak was a member of the church but no longer attends. His picture is on political posters everywhere here. There were a little over 200 at the talk on God and Science, including several professors, pastors from local congregations, visitors who are students, and, of course, members of the Ambon church. The event was co-sponsored by an Assemblies of God church, which is a first for me.

After the class we had wonderful local Ambonese food in a house restaurant. The food included a surprising gooey staple food made from the Sago tree, as well as bitter vegetables and two kinds of fish. From there we went to the beach to take part in the “crazy bamboo” ceremony. This happens in a “Christian” village which is Dutch Reformed. The young men line up, carrying a very large bamboo pole. The one doing the ceremony puts coals in a coconut and adds incense. Supposedly the “spirit” in the bamboo follows the incense. This is all fake—more for entertainment, but we had fun at the beach. Frankie, Andy and I actually did the bamboo ceremony. I felt a bit silly marching up and down the beach. After a bit of a swim in the 85+ degree water, we returned to Ambon to prepare for the church service.

I taught on Daniel at a Pentecostal church. Most of those at the class were from the church we are visiting, but also many from the Pentecostal group. The head Pentecostal pastor here is friends with Frankie and she was there. She was very enthusiastic. It was very hot at church. There were about 50-60 in attendance.

**Surabaya 1/10**

Today we travel to Surabaya. We have a very emotional farewell with Frankie and Erli. The flight to Surabaya is 2 hrs. 45 minutes. We are met by the leaders of the church here; Johnson and Alin. The church here is 275 members, in this very Muslim city. At prayer time loud Muslim prayers echo from every direction. It is an eerie sound to Western ears. Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia and is the effective capital of East Java, with more than 6 million inhabitants. The name of the city means shark/alligator.

I taught a class on Daniel for a group of close to 300. A church was planted last year about two hours away in a satellite city, with 11 members of the mission team. One year later, they are 23. The entire group drove the two hours for the midweek meeting. Even more amazing, there was a group of 13 who drove eight hours each way from JogJakarta to hear the lesson on Daniel. The faith of these Christians is very impressive. We get to bed about 12:30, with plans to get up tomorrow at 5:00 to travel to Medan.

**Medan and Balige/Lake Toba 1/11-1/13**

Today we travel to Medan. We are up at 4:30 in the morning. The first flight is 2-1/2 hours to Batam, an island close to Singapore, but which is part of Indonesia, followed by a one hour flight to Medan. Again, we are reminded of the great distances in Indonesia, as we are now nearly 3000 miles from Ambon. Medan is the chief city of Sumatra, with four million in population. It is famous for its great food. We are only staying briefly in Medan for now, as our goal for today is Lake Toba.

Lake Toba is a massive lake—80 miles by 50 miles, created by a volcanic explosion 75,000 years ago. It is high in the mountains, so the temperature is moderate. After a harrowing six hour drive through palm oil and rubber plantations, we come to the mountains and arrive at the lake. From there, we have a boat ride to the resort. We are traveling with Awi, the leader of the church in Medan, as well as Robin and Elly, the leaders of a church in Siantar, and Reinhard, who leads the singles ministry in Medan. We are staying at the resort of Mrs. (Ririe) Silalahi, who is the wife of TB Silalahi. He is the chief personal adviser to the president of Indonesia. We are not used to spending time with such important people. Mrs. Silalahi is a very strong and influential Christian. This is the land of the Batak people. The Batak were evangelized by a missionary named Nemanson in the second half of the 1800s, so this area is predominantly Christian. I am invited to teach at a high school on Science and God. The school was begun by General Silalahi. It offers free top-quality education for the children of the very poor in the area. The school is in the town on the lake named Balige. I speak to 240 students. They have great questions. We are blessed to have a wonderful time here, taking a boat ride on the lake, visiting Mr. Salilahe’s museum of Batak culture, and getting the flavor of life in the countryside in Sumatra.

On Sunday we travel to Medan. First we take a trip to the top of a mountain above Lake Toba for a beautiful view of “the most beautiful lake in the world.” Then, we take a short flight to Medan, where we are met by the leaders of the campus and married ministries here. In the evening I speak on the Kingdom of God to the church. There are almost 500 members in the church here. About 650 attend the service, including the entire church from the new planting in Siantar, about three hours from Medan. This church was planted last year with 11 members of the team. One year later, it has doubled to 23.

The church in Medan is led by Awi and Ita. This is perhaps the most evangelistic church I have visited. For such a large church, it is surprising that they never have had teachers from outside Indonesia to visit. The city is approximately half “Christian,” making it safer for the members to share their faith. The Christians are so excited about their faith. It is hard to explain how enthusiastic the church is to have us here to visit. According to Awi, he has the unusual problem that most of the members want to be leaders. They have already sent out more than one church planting. The church is very young and in great need of mature shepherds and teachers. I am sure that visitors to the church—perhaps for an extended stay to encourage the disciples--would be welcome in Medan. Please consider coming to Medan.

**Singapore 1/14-1/16**

Today we are up at 5:00 to fly to Singapore. Awi and Reinhard take us to the airport. They are amazingly gracious hosts. A very short flight takes us to Singapore. We are met by Wee Keong and Joyce. They are good friends for many years—one of my favorite couples in the church. They are currently leading the campus group of about 65 here. We are staying at the home of John, Karen Louis and their son David. John and Karen oversee the churches here in Singapore and more broadly in the region. We have lunch with Vincent and Jayne Sim. I know them from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Last March they came here to lead the Singapore church in order to free up John and Karen to work more widely to help the churches here. It was a big sacrifice for their children to move to another country. After a quick dinner with Chern and Yvette Yang (teen leaders), we are off to teach on Science and God to the campus and teens.

The Singapore Christian Church has 1100 members. It is a very mature church. They announced just last week that they will be appointing their first eldership. This is a very exciting time for the church. After some harder times, the campus and teens are really thriving here. There is a great emphasis on families, marriage and parenting. John and Karen specialize in these important aspects of the Christian life. The city/country of Singapore is unique among all nations in the world. There are nearly six million inhabitants on an island which is about 35 by 20 miles, perched on the Malacca Strait, which is the crossroads of all Asia. This is a remarkably well organized country, with virtually no crime, spotlessly clean streets, practically no traffic, amazing public transport and much more. They are ruled by a democracy which is in fact a very benevolent semi-dictatorship. The people are generally content with their government, despite the high taxes and strong legislation because they have freedom of expression, of movement and a very strong economy. If you appreciate as peaceful, ordered life, Singapore is the place for you.

In the evening I speak to 150+, mainly teens and campus. The crowd is very enthusiastic. This is the first day of the new semester at most of the Universities here and there are many visitors. What a great time. After the lesson one medical student and at least seven others agreed to study the Bible.

On Tuesday we spend delightful time in the morning with Kaitlyn Adame and a number of college students having breakfast and shopping in Chinatown. After this, I teach a class on Daniel to the staff of the Central Christian Church of Singapore—to about 30. This is followed by a visit to the indescribably amazing new botanical gardens near downtown Singapore. We then have a wonderful dinner with John and Karen Louis, with a great discussion of our separate and common vision for the future of the churches in our fellowship. The Louis are a visionary couple. They are having a real impact on Singapore with their counseling ministry. Recently, John taught a class for the government ministers of the country. Karen is secretary of the main counseling society of the country. Several high-impact Singaporeans have been converted through their marriage and parenting counseling program. On Wednesday we are up at 4:45 for our trip to Brisbane.

**Brisbane Thursday 1/16**

The flight to Brisbane includes a 2-1/2 hour flight to Denpasar, Bali, where we have a long layover. We are very blessed to have lunch with the leaders of the church of 110 members here on the principle resort island of Indonesia. We visited three years ago and are delighted to spend time with our friends here. After this, we have a six hour flight to Brisbane, where we arrive at 1:30 AM. Brisbane is on the central eastern coast of Australia. It is a city of two million—the third largest city in Australia. It is fairly hot here, but not like the tropical cities we have visited on this trip. The Australians are very laid back and seem to enjoy life more than Americans. Some of our stereotypes of Australians are true, including their love of barbecuing and of the outdoors.

I teach on From Shadow to Reality in the evening. There are about 70 in the church in Brisbane I am visiting. There were about 75 in attendance at the lesson, which included a small contingent from another church from The Gold Coast, which is a resort area about one hour and a half from Brisbane. Jan and I feel really warmly welcomed here. The church has quite a number of mature Christians. The campus ministry is on the rebound, now that the church has emphasized this—hiring three interns. They do not have full time workers for the church here, but plan on hiring a full time ministry couple in June. Things are really looking up for this group of disciples. They would love to have visitors from sister churches.

**Perth 1/18-1/20**

Today we take an 8:15 flight to Perth. The city of Perth is on the west coast of Australia, on the complete opposite side from Brisbane. The flight is 5 hours 15 minutes and the distance is 2300 miles. This is like San Diego to Atlanta. We are picked up by Scott Smith. He and his wife Joanne lead a small group in southern Perth. The church here is led by Jim and Fiona—a couple from Scotland. This is a sprawling city, covering more than eighty kilometers from north to south, with a population of 1.8 million. It is the only major city in the west of Australia. There has been a huge mining boom and the city has doubled in population in a bit over 15 years. The weather here is familiar to us. A cool, wet winter, with a long warm and dry season. It is semi-arid here, much like San Diego.

The church we are visiting is rather small, with about 25 members. In the evening I teach a class, “The Bible, From God or Man?” There are about 30 at the class, which, for this church, is a victory. Both visitors and ones who had left the church were present. There has not been “full time” leadership here for many years, which has held the church back, to some extent, but there is a plan to hire a ministry couple some time in 2013, which should help the church to get some spiritual traction.

On Saturday John taught for the church in Perth again. Today the topics are the Book of Daniel, Church History and God and Science--4-1/2 hours of teaching. Every member but one is at the classes. The evening dinner included crocodile and kangaroo, which is a unique experience for us. On Sunday John teaches on the Existence of God for the church in Perth. There are about 30 in attendance. The evening includes dinner at Petra’s house in the country. There we take a walkabout in the bush and see at least ten kangaroos, and have a wonderful time having dinner with a large portion of the church. We have had a great time with our new friends in Perth, which is, geographically, the most isolated church in our fellowship.