

# starting a Mission Prayer Group

In 2003, Lilis Suyani read a *Checkpoint* article and was inspired to start a mission prayer group. *Checkpoint* inter



Lilis Suyani

**CP:** Lilis, you first joined a mission prayer group in 1999. Can you tell me how you ended up in the group?

**Lilis:** I came from a non-Christian background and some of the people closest to me (even outside my family) weren't Christians. There were Christians and churches in my hometown in Indonesia, but I felt that the gospel wasn't easily accessible by people. That's why one of the main questions I had after I became a Christian was – what about those who have never heard of Jesus?

One of the answers often given to me was Romans 10:14-15. But a church staff worker did more than that. She gave me that passage and asked me if I wanted to join a prayer group. And so I joined my first mission prayer group.

**CP:** Can you tell me a little bit about that meeting, and what sorts of things you did?

**Lilis:** It was a group organised by a returned missionary couple. We met at their place, and each month one or two missionaries would come and share their work with us. We also heard news from some in the group who were planning to go or had just come back from a short mission trip. Then we all prayed.

It was a really good group because people like me, who were interested in 'overseas mission' in general, but had no 'specific destination' in mind, were able to come and grow in our knowledge of gospel work and the needs in various parts of the world, not just in a particular place.

**CP:** Recently you were involved in forming a prayer group for Indonesia. How did that start?

**Lilis:** Well, a few years ago, I read an article in *Checkpoint* about a mission prayer group for France. I remember being really challenged by it – challenged to not just think about joining a mission prayer group focusing on Indonesia, but to actually do something about it, and to start one myself. So I told a few trustworthy people about it – so they could pray for me and I could be accountable to them with the plan.

It was a scary thing to share my thoughts with people, because I didn't want them to think that I'd be going back to Indonesia for sure. Of course, going is great and everyone should ask the question 'why not?',

viewed her about her experience.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"  
Romans 10:14-15

but some people seem to think that only those who are pretty much set to go should join a prayer group. I think *everyone* should join a prayer group, whether they are thinking of going or not.

In fact, part of the reason why that article had such an impact was because a few weeks before I read it I met someone who was part of the original France prayer group, who didn't end up on the field, but who was and still is an active member of CMS. That's why I was prompted to action, because I was convinced that being part of a prayer group is good. Not just because God tells us to pray, but because whether people end up on the field or not, in a prayer group we are encouraging each other to take God's mission in the world seriously.

**CP: So what happened? Did you manage to get a group up and running?**

**Lilis:** I approached a few girls at church with the idea, and started collecting prayer points. Two weeks after that, five of us met to pray for some of the missionaries in Indonesia that we knew of, and also for some current issues collected from



*Lilis, reading the Checkpoint article about a mission prayer group for France.*

Indonesian newspapers online. Over time, the group grew and some guys joined us as well.

Because of some changes taking place at church and in my life at that time, the group stopped meeting for a while. However, being encouraged and prayed for by older godly Christians, and having someone willing to take the responsibility of leading the group, late last year another prayer group for Indonesia was formed. It was a long process, but worth it! And now we are meeting regularly to pray and to find out more about gospel work in Indonesia.

**CP: What are some of the things you've been encouraged by through being in a prayer group?**

**Lilis:** Of course learning about how God works overseas and answers our prayers is always good. And then there is the sense of real gospel partnership we have with the people we pray for.

But I think one the most encouraging things I've found is seeing how God uses our prayers to bring about his purposes in us – changing us to be more like his Son. I saw that through our prayers, he actually shapes the way we see everything: people, possessions, government, priorities and even life itself. And after seeing his work in us,

it is then less of a surprise to see him using us as part of the answers to our own prayers.

**CP: Do you have any advice for people interested in starting or joining a group?**

**Lilis:** From my experience:

- Ask your CMS Branch or the mission secretary at your church if they have any information about a prayer group that you can join.
- If you don't have a group to join, or want to start your own, pray for God to provide likeminded people to form the group. Pray for them to be faithful, and also for God to change them through the group.
- Pray for people who can support you through thick and thin. Ask them to pray for you. You will need these people, especially if you are going to take the responsibility of leading the group.
- Pray for God to provide someone godly, responsible and faithful to lead/co-ordinate a group. You want someone who is faithful, as leading a prayer group (just like leading any other group) isn't always easy.
- Just start, even if there are only a few of you to start with. (Four is a good number; fewer than that can be a bit difficult, unless you have very committed people.)
- Finally, keep in mind that God is in control, and he will make the group happen or not. And if it does happen and is formed, it will be his group, and he will be the one doing the work, changing people, and working through their prayers.

*Lilis Suyani is a member of CMS and attends FOCUS Church at the University of New South Wales.*