

checkpoint.

SPRING 2022

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY MAGAZINE



MISSION IN OUR REGION

In this edition: Reaching the lost | Hope in the Philippines | Serving Timor-Leste



From the Editor

For over ten years, CMS has maintained a strategic focus on cross-cultural mission amongst people in our region, in the Pacific, North Australia and South East Asia. In this *Checkpoint* we consider some of the thinking behind such a focus, and look with thankfulness to God at gospel work that has begun or is continuing.

In his lead article, International Director Peter Rodgers reminds us of how from the earliest days, mission has radiated outwards—from “Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Applying this to Australia, we know that there is great gospel need right here—including to the Aboriginal believers and communities amongst whom we have ministered for many years. Beyond our borders, we see needs and opportunities among the people groups of the Pacific region and South East Asia. Those opportunities exist everywhere, whether close at hand or in the many other places where CMS missionaries work—even “to the ends of the earth”.

We have, therefore, two prayerful hopes for this edition of *Checkpoint*. One is to give a sense of how wonderfully God has answered our prayers for our region. The total number of CMS missionaries in our region has increased greatly, along with the gospel impact of these workers. You can read some of their stories in this edition.

The second hope is that *Checkpoint* readers will maintain and increase their commitment to mission in our region, especially by praying and giving to the gospel work of CMS. Perhaps as you read, you may prayerfully decide that, God willing, you too want to offer your gifts and your life to the mission that lies right on our doorstep.



Gordon Cheng

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CMS is a fellowship of Christian people and churches committed to global mission. We work together to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our vision is for a world that knows Jesus. We aim to do this by:

- Reaching gospel-poor peoples for Christ
- Equipping Christian leaders for church and society
- Engaging churches in cross-cultural mission



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We don't have the space to cover all the wonderful stories that CMS has to tell within the pages of this *Checkpoint*. If you want to read more, scan the QR code or go to: cms.org.au/checkpoint



REACHING THE LOST



CMS has made a deliberate decision to focus on mission in locations close to Australia for many years, while not losing sight of other places where CMS missionaries continue to serve. Here CMS International Director **Peter Rodgers** explores why mission in our region is strategic. ►



Our commitment to global mission has not wavered. But what about mission in our own region?



The gospel radiates out, beginning close at hand

Following the death of Stephen, the book of Acts records the spread of the gospel radiating out from its beginnings in Jerusalem. Initially believers travelled through Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-2). By Acts 13, believers headed north to places located in modern-day Lebanon, Cyprus and Turkey, speaking to Jews and Greeks, telling them the good news about the resurrected Lord Jesus.

The words of Jesus in Acts 1:8, “You will be my witnesses in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth” were coming to fruition.

As the believers moved out, it was natural they took the message first to those who lived nearby. Very soon a church was established in Antioch, and it was from there that Paul was sent on his first missionary journey.

Of course, in obedience to Christ, “the ends of the earth” was their goal. There was no sense that mission would stop with those living in their region. In Romans 15:8 Paul writes, “So from Jerusalem to Illyricum (modern-day region of Croatia/Bosnia/Albania), I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. *It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.*”

In CMS we are seeking to be obedient to the command of Jesus in Acts 1:8. Like Paul, we long to see churches planted and mature amongst every people group, as far as the ends of the earth. Our commitment to global mission has not wavered. But what about mission in our own region?

Mission in our region

Since the 1950s, CMS has been sending missionaries to South East Asia, but the numbers were small. In 2013, conscious of hundreds of millions who do not know Christ, we committed ourselves to expand and grow mission in our region. We define our region as South East Asia, the South Pacific and Indigenous people groups in North Australia.

Looking back over the last 10 years

Under God and in partnership with the CMS family in prayer and giving, there is much to be thankful for as we consider how our involvement has changed between 2013 and 2022:

- We have grown from 24 missionary families or individuals, to 38 missionary families or individuals serving in our region;
- In South East Asia we have grown from mission in four countries to nine countries; and
- In work amongst Buddhist people groups we have grown from five missionary families or individuals to 11 missionary families or individuals.

2013 - 2022 SNAPSHOT



We are also deeply thankful to God for the recent growth of our missionary work in North Australia, particularly the increase of missionaries serving in key Indigenous communities in Arnhem land.

Sadly, this growth is not replicated in the South Pacific. Despite the needs for discipleship and Bible teaching, we have seen little growth in our missionary presence. We are thankful to God for Joel and Tiff Atwood serving amongst university students in Vanuatu and rejoice with David Pettett who has finally been able to enter the Solomon Islands to teach the Bible at the Anglican college. Soon we hope to send missionaries for a Bible translation program in Vanuatu. But across the Pacific islands there are so many more opportunities that we would love to be involved in supporting.

Many opportunities are on our doorstep

In the Lord's providence, Australia is placed in a strategic part of the world, with millions of people who have never heard the gospel on our doorstep. We don't need to travel far to find people groups who know nothing of Christ.

In Indonesia, the island of Bali is reopening to tourists. For decades it has been a playground for Aussies. As it opens its doors again to international travel, we are thrilled to be placing our first long-term workers, Chris and Erin, to help support the growth of the local Balinese church. The Balinese follow their own brand of Hinduism and as yet very few of them know of the peace and freedom that Christ brings.

The Balinese are just one of almost 900 gospel-poor people groups in South East Asia. Aside from the Balinese, Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world, approximately 240 million people. If we have a passion to reach Muslim people for Christ, then Indonesia is full of opportunity.

Similarly, South East Asia is home to most of the world's Buddhist people groups. Apart from work in Cambodia for many years, CMS has had little engagement in the Buddhist world. Recently we have been building new partnerships with local Christians in other countries in the region.



I have the joy of living in a multicultural part of Sydney. Our local church has had a particular desire to reach out to those from Vietnam. But how about the 80 million Vietnamese people in Vietnam itself? CMS has recently partnered with an evangelical church in Vietnam with a heart for church planting. The growth of the church there is one of those surprising things that the Lord is doing. Could more people go and take gospel to the Vietnam?

What is true of Vietnam is true of other Buddhist countries such as Laos and Myanmar. The recent unrest in Myanmar, as well as being an ongoing tragedy, has been a hindrance to growing our missionary work, but as things settle, we're optimistic that the door will open again, and we can build on our partnerships with local Christians.

Over the next few years, under God, we will be looking to build new partnerships in the region and playing our part in seeing more people in South East Asia and the South Pacific who know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Mission opportunities within Australia

In North Australia, CMS work started in 1908. We have rich and long-term partnerships with the Diocese of the Northern Territory and Nungalinga College in Darwin. We are also looking to expand our ministries within the Kimberley and consider possibilities in Far North Queensland.

As we know, the people from the nations we so passionately want to reach are also now our neighbours. It is our conviction that ministry today in Australia must be cross-cultural and the Australian church needs to grow a heart for, and develop skills to reach their neighbours from other cultures with the gospel. CMS is well positioned to share its experience and expertise in encouraging cross-cultural mission locally. Mentac, our apprenticeship program, operates in several cities and has proved to be a terrific training ground for local mission, but also as a first step in moving overseas in Muslim ministry. Over the coming years we would love to expand our Mentac program, including developing training for outreach to Buddhist peoples.

The challenge of our region

Growth in our own missionary numbers does not tell the full story. The church cannot yet echo Paul's words and say that in our region the gospel of Christ has been fully proclaimed. Far from it.

Our commitment to mission in our region does not lessen our commitment to go to the ends of the earth. That always remains our goal. But going forward it is our conviction that we must also do more, much more, to reach those who live in our region.

There is so much yet to do to see churches established and mature amongst every people group—both in our region and to the ends of the earth. Under God, it remains an ongoing joy to be united in partnership in seeking to see *a world that knows Jesus* together with you.

go



Will you take up gospel opportunities that exist in North Australia, or in neighbouring countries? Contact your local CMS branch to discuss the possibilities.

Serving Timor-Leste



CMS missionaries Chris and Julie Dean have served in Timor-Leste since 2021. Checkpoint asked Chris to talk about their journey to serving in cross-cultural mission.

Julie and I have always had an interest in cross-cultural mission. We have loved to hear the stories of missionaries on Home Assignment, especially of how God was at work throughout the world, to bring people to a saving knowledge of himself through the gospel.

In fellowship with our local church, we became personally committed to supporting cross-cultural mission, and missionaries. This commitment expressed itself in various ways including praying for unreached people groups, giving to mission and connecting with missionaries on Home Assignment and on location.

Why commit to this service?

In partnering with missionaries in different ways, we were often blessed by the encouragement of our mutual faith in Jesus. Our desire to be faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus in our own culture was strengthened by partnering with missionaries serving Jesus faithfully in their location.

Most missionaries we knew were very normal Christians. Nonetheless we were inspired by their examples of following Jesus where he called them. Often we talked and prayed together about whether one day God might lead us into cross-cultural mission. We remained open to this possibility through the various stages of our family's life: from being young marrieds initially experiencing difficulty conceiving; through the blessing of two sons, in God's timing; through parenting, everyday employment, and serving together in the local congregation; through theological education, church-planting, and bi-vocational work (as a pastor and part-time optometrist).

In 2018, during annual leave from our parish, we visited missionary friends serving in Japan. For the first time, we saw men, women, and children literally worshipping idols. This was a confronting yet galvanising experience. In Japan, God brought home

to us in a new way the utter tragedy of the lostness of those outside of Christ. They are "without hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Through this experience, and through prayer and conversations with our missionary friends, we felt compelled to offer for cross-cultural missionary service.

Where to serve?

As we had decided as a couple on the primary question of whether to serve as missionaries, we applied to CMS. But we were very open-minded regarding a secondary question—location.

As we sought input from CMS, Timor-Leste emerged as potentially a good fit for us. I had done some volunteer eyecare work there, in Timor-Leste's early years of independence. We had an understanding of Roman Catholicism (Timor-Leste's majority religion), particularly through my Catholic upbringing. The language (Tetun) was apparently not too difficult to learn (taking into account that we are both over 50). My experience as a Presbyterian minister could also be strategic, as CMS works in partnership with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor-Leste.

In God's providence, we have been in Timor-Leste since September 2021. We've learned first-hand that although Roman Catholicism is the majority religion, the prevailing worldview here remains traditional Timorese animism. Most Timorese live in fear of spirits and seek to appease them or gain power from them. There is a great need to proclaim the gospel of God's liberating grace through Jesus to the Timorese people, and to raise up, disciple, train and mentor pastors, evangelists and other Timorese gospel workers.



go



For decades the Deans have had a heart for cross-cultural mission. Are you open to God's leading? Find out more about the journey to going with CMS.





STARTING SMALL



CMS missionaries Marty and Jenny Foord serve in Singapore, where Marty is the principal of the Evangelical Theological College of Asia (ETCAsia), and Jenny is Dean of Women. Here Jenny describes the exciting growth and impact of this Singaporean initiative.

When we were first approached by a group of Singaporean pastors to join a start-up theological college, ETCAsia, we had many questions. These pastors were doing extraordinary work in their own churches, and some have experienced breathtaking growth. Surely they didn't need our help?

A thoughtful Singaporean initiative

But we found that these pastors had thought matters through very carefully. They had spent the better part of 15 years praying and planning for a college like ETCAsia—an evangelical college where future ministry workers could train locally in Singapore, rather than in Australia or the UK. And yes, they did want Singaporeans to run the college—eventually. Their prayer remains that in time, God will raise up godly, gifted local ministry workers to lead the college. Therefore we see ourselves as interim workers who are praying that God will put us out of our task here in Singapore!

...we see ourselves as interim workers who are praying that God will put us out of our task here in Singapore!

Wonderfully, we are already seeing this happening. Our Greek lecturer is a recent graduate of ETCAsia. In 2023 another Singaporean will join the faculty as a New Testament lecturer after completing his PhD. Other students show enormous promise as potential future faculty members.

Also, like many Singaporean Christians, the pastors who founded the college are passionate about outreach to surrounding Asian countries. They pray and hope that the college will become a training centre not just for Singapore, but also for near neighbours in Asia. This academic year we will have a student joining us from Vietnam and another from Hong Kong, as well as local Singaporeans.

Challenges greatly outweighed by encouragements

At the same time, we cannot pretend that it's all been smooth sailing. Start-up theological colleges can be fragile in finances, reputation, and many other ways. We currently have a small faculty, a very small administration staff, and we can barely fit into our tiny premises. These are humble beginnings.

But in God's mercy, the encouragements have vastly outweighed the challenges. Outgrowing our facilities is a great problem to have! Over the past six years since the college opened, God has grown our student body. New students have continued to enrol, even in the last two years of the pandemic.

Godly students in hard situations

Another praise point is that our students are godly and faithful. Many of them come from non-Christian homes and have faced all kinds of difficulties in trying to live out their faith. For example, some are expected to participate in ancestor worship rituals, but as Christians, they cannot worship anyone but the one true God.





IN SINGAPORE

We recently heard how one of our older students gently guided a younger student in dealing with family expectations of ancestor worship at her uncle's funeral. It would normally be expected that she would participate in the ancestor worship rituals. To not do so would seem extremely offensive and disrespectful. The older student advised the younger to make herself as helpful as possible in caring for her relatives over the five-day funeral, by serving the food and drinks, and making sure everyone was comfortable, and suggested that it might be good to offer a financial contribution for her deceased uncle's medical bills.

The aim was to be a good witness for Christ, and her conduct was noticed and appreciated by the older generation. Thankfully, it also lessened the backlash. Even though the family observed that she didn't participate in the ancestor worship rituals, they commented on how helpful she was and started asking why the other young people weren't being so helpful! No one criticised her for holding to the Christian faith, which is what can often happen in these situations. In areas like this, and in many other ways, our students teach and inspire us. We are learning much about the difficulties that Singaporean Christians can face.

Reaching the region

Another great encouragement is our alumni. ETCAsia now has two (soon to be three) graduate cohorts. One graduate has recently returned to Myanmar with his wife, where he is now the principal of a Christian training college. They are facing considerable danger during this time of unrest but have never wavered from their goal of serving Christ in their home country. Other alumni are currently working as pastors, youth workers, children's workers, women's workers, and campus workers here in Singapore. Another has very recently moved to Cambodia as a missionary.

Our soon-to-be third group of graduates includes two congregational pastors, a church planter, a women's worker, and a missionary to Japan.

Tailoring ministry to the context

Since we arrived, we've been challenged to tailor every part of our ministry to the local context, whether we are serving at the college, or at a local church, or meeting with a campus group. Every workshop, Q&A session, or pastoral conversation needs to fit the contours of the local life. Every sermon and lecture needs to be shaped and applied in a way that is relevant and culturally sensitive to the lives and struggles of Christians in Asia. Serving cross-culturally is a privilege, but it's also very humbling! As outsiders, we are and always will be learners of this culture.

We thank God for each student and graduate, and pray that our Father will continue to raise up many more workers for his harvest fields here in Asia.



You can support the ministry of the Foords and other CMS missionaries by prayer and regular financial giving. Go to give.cms.org.au to play a part in what God is doing in Singapore and beyond.

Read more online...



Read more about the Evangelical Theological College of Asia on their website.

GOD'S WORD *in our own language*



CMS missionaries Matt and Lisa Pearson have been living and ministering in Kunbarlanja, among the Kunwinjku people, since 2018. Here Matt speaks of the impact of having God's word in their own language.

When the Kunwinjku Shorter Bible¹ (KSB) arrived in Kunbarlanja, in the north of Australia, in 2018, it marked several changes in the church and the community. Since then, we have seen Jesus' kindness in giving the Kunwinjku church what is needed to keep moving towards maturity—for the people of God to become equipped for the works of service which God has prepared (after the pattern in Ephesians 4:11-16). The Kunwinjku church is experiencing a reformation!

Our friend Lois Nadjamerrek said to us, "We don't need outside help. It is our time to share the good news in our community. We have God's word in our own language."

What does this look like in this context where God's word is being translated into the Kunwinjku language?

Life and ministry in Kunbarlanja

Lois and the church in Kunbarlanja were already training women and children, so they invited our family to join them in discipling men also, to help ensure that the KSB is accessible to all Kunwinjku people. The following verses have helped guide our thinking as we relate to our community:

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:11-13)*

We have therefore been involved in Bible studies, reading the Bible with people, recording the Bible, sharing life with people and seeking ways to support the church to do the good works which God has prepared for them to do (see Ephesians 2:10). As people have heard God's voice with the clarity of their own language, we have seen them become built up into the body of Christ, as recipients of the gifts Jesus has given his church in Kunbarlanja.

It is our time to share the good news in our community. We have God's word in our own language.

Translation assists understanding

Being able to understand and commune with God in our first language is a gift many of us are unaware we have received. When you or I access Bible Gateway online in English, we can choose which of the 61 translations suit our preference!

We know that sharing the good news in our community will happen best when God's voice is able to be heard and explained in a way our target audience will understand. We have seen this work unfolding and expanding here since the KSB arrived. Every Sunday we read aloud through the next paragraph of a book of the Bible which was previously untranslated into Kunwinjku. At the time of writing, we're listening to Hebrews 11. As the treasures of God's word are discovered, mined, and refined through further discussions within the church, people are better resourced to share this precious news with their families and others in the community.

1. KSB = Genesis, Exodus, Ruth and the complete New Testament.

The work of “becoming mature”, and “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) is an un-ending task! We’re very thankful for the ongoing support of the CMS fellowship which allows us to join in this process with our Kunwinjku brothers and sisters in Christ.

Building Kunwinjku believers

It takes many years to learn a language and culture. I am currently 35 and still learning new things about my culture, and still learning new words from my English language. So even if the Lord wills and we live amongst the Kunwinjku people for many more years, we will still be learning, and gaining new insights into its culture and people. Therefore, a large part of our ministry in Kunbarlanja is—and will continue to be—praying with people, and for people. As much as we are here to minister with the gifts God has given us, so also we are here to learn and to pray.

As for us, so for other parts of the CMS fellowship, there are many ways to support the church here: by giving as we build long-term relationships, by praying for the church members, and by asking God for a new wave of translation work to be done by Kunwinjku speakers. We need each other. These activities cannot be done in isolation, nor by overlooking the gifts Jesus has given the church in

the Kunwinjku people themselves, or by relying on outside programs and initiatives.

Our Kunwinjku brothers and sisters in Christ (and now us, as part of that community) have work to do—just like every local gathering of Christian people. Together we’re being equipped for the works of service which God has prepared for each of us so that the body of Christ would be built up.

What an incredible opportunity God has given CMS and our family, together with the Kunwinjku community, to display the unity we share in Jesus. We have the privilege of joining with our Kunwinjku brothers and sisters as co-workers in doing the work he has given each of us. Please continue to pray that God would use all of us together in this equipping of the Kunwinjku community for works of service ‘until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

give



As well as praying, you can support the work of growing mature believers in Kunbarlanja by giving to the work of the Pearsons through CMS. Go to **give.cms.org.au** and make your contribution there.



Image: Translation checking session held in the church.



Loving our neighbour



CMS missionary Maggie Crewes serves with Hope for Justice in Cambodia, helping girls who are victims of exploitation. Here she reflects on the needs and opportunities in locations in our region.

When we consider mission in locations close to Australia (or even in it, like Northern Australia), do we assume this nearness could make it easier or quicker? Does mission within our region require less preparation, time, or financial investment? The short answer is probably no, on almost all counts. Certain locations may be geographically closer but culturally very different, with worldviews and people groups often disparate from our own.

Many of the people groups in these geographically closer locations are also quite rightly called ‘gospel-poor’ (defined by CMS as places where less than 2% of the population are Bible-believing Christians).

One neighbour in need

Here in Cambodia, there remains a great need for organisations like CMS to place missionaries to help bear witness to the gospel. The longer I am here, the more the unique challenges of this country and its people are revealed. Most Khmer follow the teachings of the Buddha, and this is often intertwined with ancestor worship, as well as family and cultural commitments that rule daily life and practice. Add to this the legacy of a country still recovering from genocide in the 1970s. The subsequent trauma and issues of suspicion are a real challenge in establishing deeper relationships with people. To be a credible witness here takes significant preparation, together with patience, humility and a willingness to build trust and relationship bridges that God can use for his gospel purposes. Only in the Lord’s strength can we cross the road to the other side and seek to help our neighbour in their need.

Few people in Cambodia know or have even heard of the name of Jesus. The Cambodian

church is still very young and finding its feet. Pastors need training, ministries need supporting, and creative ways to reach communities who have not heard about Christ need to be developed. Outreach must be conducted with sensitivity and care and in a way that touches the daily lives and needs of the poor and vulnerable. People need to know that you care about them as a person before you start to share any kind of message.

My work in Cambodia

As a CMS missionary I am seconded to a ministry, Hope for Justice, that reaches out to young girls who have been lured and groomed into sexual exploitation and trafficking. Pray with me as we seek to build a strong team to reach out to these very vulnerable girls, and that God would provide opportunities for the Christian staff to speak of their hope in Jesus and the new start he offers to each one. When we are willing, and we ask him, he takes our small and often pathetic attempts, with all our cultural bungling, and uses us in this work.

There are other possibilities worth considering. For example, Australia has been and still is a destination country for refugees, economic migrants and students from our region. Can we creatively explore how to build on these links and open up new gospel opportunities? The ‘rice-fields’ of those who have not heard the gospel in our region are ripe for harvest!

go



The gospel needs in our region can seem overwhelming, but this only makes the challenge to ‘Go’ more urgent. Discover what opportunities there are by contacting your local CMS branch.



WHO IS THIS NEIGHBOUR?

Who is this neighbour—
this one just near to me?
Same world, and yet so very
differently we see—
perhaps uncomfortingly.

That culture, worldview—
so diametrically opposed to mine.
Yet we, as God's creation,
united in our common need
of mercy, justice,
Love divine.

Our need to know,
believe, belong and hope—
depends not upon our race.
It is our common human need.
So for us, to share our God's
amazing grace—
Embrace.

A POEM BY MAGGIE CREWES

*CMS is looking for Christians who can
share God's grace across cultures.*



Where will you serve?
cms.org.au/opportunities



Hope IN THE



CMS missionaries Howard and Michelle Newby have deep family connections with the Philippines. Here Michelle explains how reading the Bible can completely

change the lives of Filipino believers, and of the opportunity for CMS to make an ongoing contribution.

“Look at this place!” said my father, gazing out at our poor Filipino village. “There is no hope and no future. Pack your things, we are leaving.” I was five and thankfully didn’t understand just how tough our lives were about to become. Growing up, I experienced real hunger and desperation. Later I met Howard and we both became Christians. We married and moved to Australia, where he was from.

In 2017 we returned as CMS missionaries to be part of our village’s future, and to help spread the amazing news of eternal hope in Christ.

The Philippines and Christianity

The Philippines could appear to be a majority Christian country with widespread belief in Jesus. In truth, most of what we see is folk Christianity. Many believe in needing to appease spirits to avoid being cursed, or to receive the blessing of material benefit or physical healing. To them, Jesus is someone who might be able to help with their worries in this life.

Several years ago, as an example, we attended an Easter parade, with people covered in their own blood—either from self-flagellation or because they had literally been nailed to crosses and speared in their sides. We spoke to one elderly man as the nail holes in his hands and feet were treated at the medical tent. He said he did it in the hope that his grandchildren might be blessed with good education and jobs.

Many Filipinos believe in gaining spiritual power through such actions. But they do not completely believe in Jesus, who has full authority over the spirits, nor that he alone can turn away God’s anger in this life and the next.

Carefully reading the Bible changes lives

There is a great need for Filipino people to meet Jesus through God’s word and allow it to impact their lives. If Filipino people can learn to apply basic critical thinking skills to reading the Bible, it can be life-changing. We have had the privilege of seeing an entire congregation leave a cult and start a new church. In part, this was a result of 18 months of weekly Bible studies using a simple three-question method for reading the Bible. One member of the former cult said to us: “Older brother Howard, I did what you taught us with the Bible, and I could see that the pastor was wrong!”



Helping pastors

We know pastors who have only had two days of training. We know pastors who have attended Bible college for five years, yet who inadvertently teach works not grace. Thankfully, we also know many Christian leaders and church members who understand grace and teach it well.



PHILIPPINES

How can we as CMS missionaries help? One thing we can do is to assist people to read the Bible carefully, and ask straightforward questions about what is in front of them.

If Filipino people can learn to apply basic critical thinking skills to reading the Bible it can be life-changing.

We need more people willing to come alongside Filipinos and ask these questions. The Philippines need long-term missionaries to form relationships, to share the gospel with unreached ethnic and Muslim people groups, to take the time to help people to read their Bibles, to equip leaders to teach effectively and preach grace, and to model the importance of effective kids and youth ministries.

My mother was horrified that I would return with my family to our old life in the Philippines. But we came because the need here is immense and the workers are few. Maybe you are someone the Lord will send to join in this work?



go



Could you play a part in bringing better Bible teaching to the Philippines? Find out more about serving long-term.



A Bible-reading method

We encourage Filipino believers to consider three questions as they work to understand a Bible passage better.



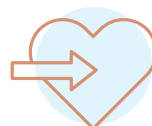
What stood out in this passage?

.....



Based on what you read, do you have any questions?

.....



How does the passage apply to your life?



In some places this is known as the Swedish method. CMS missionary Peter Blowes describes it further here.

Living IN THE tension



CMS missionaries Keith and Marion Birchley have found that our geographically close Papua New Guinean (PNG) neighbours also share some

painful struggles—the tension between this world and the claims of the gospel.

Keith writes:

Ministry here in Papua New Guinea (PNG), whether to students or others, is very much a ministry within our region. As a physical reminder of this, Cairns in the north of Queensland is far closer to Port Moresby (the PNG capital) than it is to Brisbane, which is about twice the distance away.

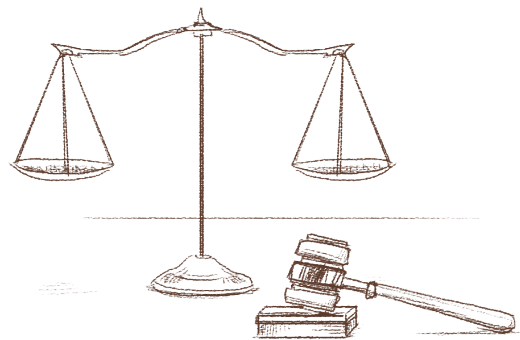
But to serve in PNG is also to serve in another world. To live out the gospel here, whoever you are, is to have one foot in the modern 21st century world, and the other in a tribal world that has existed for thousands of years.

The PNG students and friends we work amongst are navigating these tensions. Some of the tensions here are between cultures. Some of the tensions come as friends face clashes between what they read in the Bible and what their culture produces, demands, allows, or expects. Here, briefly, are some of their stories.

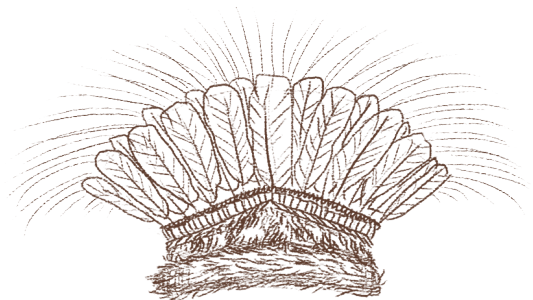
Greg* is an English major graduate with pronounced skills in language and writing. He is also a poet. In a polite note explaining his non-attendance at a ministry meeting on one occasion, he wrote: “I don’t know if you’ve heard about a tribal fight up in the highlands... More than 200 houses have been burnt to the ground including our family home. I’ve been working on registering an association to raise funds and help my people...”



Jessie is an exceptional law graduate, only a few years out of uni, who is already a barrister. She too has one foot in a profession in Port Moresby and the other in conflicts back home. She told us recently, “my people have had continuous tribal fighting since 2004.”



Ben is really from the PNG equivalent of aristocracy. He is a natural leader and a prince among one of the most powerful tribal groupings in the country. He has inherited the mantle of power and influence—whether he likes it or not! Others’ expectations of him have shaped his life from birth. Now, having graduated in the medical profession, he is asking the question, “Who am I apart from what others would have me be?” Encouragingly, he told us recently that he is aware that his relationship with Christ is really what he needs to be focusing on. I have planned to meet with Ben weekly, as we are able.



Ronald is another 'rich young ruler'. The world is his oyster. He is both inspired and troubled by the example of his grandfather who gave up his chieftaincy in order to follow and help the missionaries. What will this young man opt to do with his shining array of gifts and competencies? Lots of people would like him to make lots of money in Port Moresby or overseas and leave his growing Christian convictions comfortably and undemonstratively in the cupboard. In a country where 98% of the population, according to government censuses, identify as Christian, it would be easy to make the same claim and live in a way that simply blended with prevailing (and not particularly Christian) expectations.



Serena is one of the young female graduates who would love a life in the work of gospel ministry and Bible teaching. These two things are her twin passions. A graduate in paramedics, she has a respectable job in this area. But for her extended family, it's not enough. She is being pressured to go back to university and complete a second degree, this time at the top of the tree: medicine. Every PNG family seems to dream of a son or daughter reaching the highest level of social and financial position.



Albert is a young graduate having girlfriend problems. A year ago he was unfaithful to a lovely girl he has been involved with for a few years. Repentant and wanting to go God's way and be faithful to one woman for life, his tribal background is against him. "Uncle", he said to me, "all my (churchgoing) uncles and mentors are polygamous and always have been." He will be seen as peculiar if he is faithful to one woman.



Lloyd is an engineering graduate who (strangely) lives in a very poor settlement not far from our church. He joined us for lunch on Christmas Day. His story is that he dares not be too prominent, especially in work or career, as he is in effect in hiding, and has been for seven years. Due to an incident in his home village, he has been put on notice that there is a 'pay-back' killing somewhere in his future. Yet Lloyd is trusting the Lord Jesus Christ and worships regularly with the people of God each weekend. How we admire him.



A fight for the heart

These individual stories could be multiplied many times over. In addition to these struggles, people are frequently confused about the suffering and grace that the cross reveals, and alternative 'gospels' that emphasise personal victory and prosperity as the path laid out for Christians. Being a true follower of Jesus in PNG, as elsewhere, involves making hard choices. We are praying that God will enable us to explain his gospel truth and its implications, and that others in CMS would join us in prayer and, in some cases, in person.

pray



Christians in PNG face hard choices not only over how they might fit into their culture (or not), but in discerning truth amidst sometimes conflicting messages about the gospel. Pray that God might give his wisdom, courage and strength as they make these choices on a daily basis.

A question of CONFIDENCE



CMS missionaries Jon and Deb serve in South East Asia with Bible college students and other believers. Here Jon outlines the contribution Australian Christians can make to helping South East Asians read, learn and teach the Bible's message.

Australia has been called the 'lucky country'. While luck doesn't account for God's sovereignty, it is fair to say that most Australian Christians have many great options: choices about what to study and which university to attend; faithful churches and often numerous small group Bible studies they could join and benefit from. Australia even enjoys good internet, which enables access to online study and nearly limitless online biblical resources.

Most South East Asians do not have such choices. Certainly that is true for the majority of South East Asian Christians who do not live in cities, or in a better resourced area.

As a result, Australian missionaries often discover that they are well placed to use their own well-resourced background for the benefit of local believers. They often find they have opportunities to equip students in Bible colleges and beyond, in better understanding and teaching the Bible.

Beyond rote learning

The default educational method in South East Asia is rote learning, with associated strengths and deficiencies. When rote methods are practiced within a hierarchical culture (meaning that students are reluctant to ask questions of a teacher in authority), it tends to produce 'correct' answers with limited depth of understanding.

Australian missionaries dealing with students in this context can glean the strengths of this rote learning—such as important information being readily available and memorised. As well, they can help students approach subjects with a more inductive, analytical and logical framework. For example, if students can begin to see the logical flow of Paul's argument in Romans, then the connection between the severity of our sin (outlined in Romans 1-3) and the amazing solution in Jesus (explained in Romans 3:21 and onward) can be grasped in a new way. Thus, everyone's faith is enlivened and strengthened.

Helping students ask questions and teach others

Similarly Australian Christians who trust the Bible have long been taught about the 'priesthood of all believers'—that all have equal standing and access to God's salvation in Christ. Not only so, but all Christians can mutually teach one another from God's word.

However, for South East Asians raised in a hierarchical culture, such a concept can seem difficult and foreign. New students in a Bible college are often hesitant to answer questions, let alone ask them. Missionaries from a less hierarchical culture (such as Australia) are often able to help students to ask questions about what they don't understand, and even question what is being taught—of course in a respectful manner. This process means that Bible students become less reluctant to answer questions for fear that their answers are wrong, and so make progress in their biblical understanding.

Then, and as students grow in their understanding, they themselves become more confident to teach others (see 2 Timothy 2:2).

Please keep praying for the missionaries who are serving in theological education in South East Asia—that their experience and training can be beneficial for building up and equipping future Christian leaders in the church.

There are millions of people who do not know Jesus in South East Asia. The needs are immense in this neighbouring harvest field. Could God be calling you to be a worker here?



Australian Christians can learn from and teach South East Asian Christians, especially in reading and understanding the Bible better. Could you offer your help? Contact your CMS branch to discover opportunities.

GOD'S *grace* IN THE SOLOMONS



CMS short-term worker David Pettett has had a long and varied ministry career—serving in city and regional Australian parishes, church planting in Japan, and working in prison and hospital chaplaincies. He is currently lecturing at Bishop Patteson Theological College in the Solomon Islands. Here he speaks of the need for supporting and continuing this ministry long-term.

When I first came to the Solomon Islands three years ago with Langham Partnerships to help run a two-week preaching school, we visited Bishop Patteson Theological College, the training college for the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM). As we spoke with the college principal, my colleague suggested that I could teach at the college. Already wanting to have another teacher with a PhD on staff, the principal thought that was a good idea. So I began a four-year contract at the beginning of 2020.

Serving students during COVID

Due to COVID and border closures, I spent the last two years teaching remotely. Thanks to God, I finally managed to get all the necessary permissions and clearances to come to the Solomons even when a major outbreak of COVID had put Honiara into lockdown. I arrived on 4 February this year. The start of the semester was delayed because of COVID. As I have spent time with the students in person this year, I have been very encouraged by how much they have learned from the emailed lecture notes over the previous two years.

The Anglican Church of Melanesia demonstrates a clear biblical focus, and an urgent desire for evangelism. This means I can draw students' attention to the Scriptures to challenge fuzzy thinking. Like most of us, they tend to emphasise law rather than God's grace. It has been a delight to see them light up when they can see the truth of Romans 5, the chapter that begins with these profound verses:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

Learning to apply God's grace

Students in their final year of their BTh studies are required to write a 15,000-word essay. Part of my role is to help them decide the focus of the essay and to work with them in developing their argument. Most students have questions about their local culture, and how much people understand how to demonstrate their Christian faith in the way they live. It has been a privilege to help students consider and then write about how the gospel impacts culture: why there may be certain cultural practices some tribes have given up, and why others have tried to syncretise those practices with the gospel. All the while, we are wrestling with how to apply God's grace in thought and action.

I will finish my contract at the end of 2023. I will be 72 then. It is time to retire and ensure the ministry is continued by younger people. The deputy principal asked me last year to recommend two people with PhDs to help further the work of the college. Could one of them be you?

care



How informed are you about our Pacific neighbours? What steps could you take to learn more, including asking those who live in your community about their story and what they know of Jesus?



BETWEEN



CMS missionaries Malcolm and Leanne serve in a Bible college where the students often find themselves living between two worlds: the world of spirits, and the world of materialism. Here they speak of this experience.

Our city is a rapidly developing centre that has become a technological, industrial, cultural, and educational hub for the north of the country. It is a mixture of the poor and the wealthy—something we are reminded of each time we look out the window or step outside the building complex we live in. Churches here are allowed to exist but do so under the watchful eye of the socialist authorities.

The two most significant challenges to gospel ministry here may at first seem strangely opposed: the pull of traditional religion, and the attraction of materialism and prosperity.

The uncertainty of traditional practices

Out of our window we see a large cauldron where offerings are made to ancestors twice a month. These offerings follow the lunar calendar. Other events such as new year, or occasions such as weddings and funerals, are important times to worship and pray to family ancestors.

We serve at a Bible College where most of the students don't fit either into the traditional world of spirits, or the new world of materialism.

Despite appearances, these practices are not considered to be specifically religious. They form part of the cultural and social fabric that make a person a citizen of this nation. Therefore, to turn to Christ (and away from such practices) is to turn away from the very things that make someone part of a family and part of their society. To refuse to participate in such practices is a big deal for new Christians, and can lead to pain and rejection in family relationships.

Consider the situation of Han*, a newish Christian. Han's mother isn't sure what will happen after she dies. Will she be reincarnated as an animal or other being? Will she live on in a spirit realm? She neither knows nor seems to care too much. Yet she goes on with her usual religious/cultural practices at home and at the temple, hoping it will help in whatever her future holds. Like many, she appears driven by the fear of what might happen if she stops.

During Han's first year as a Christian, he wasn't allowed to speak of his faith to his mother or the rest of the family. It wasn't until Han helped them during a crisis that they softened and allowed him to abstain from family rituals and worship.

Materialism and prosperity

While these rituals are rooted firmly in this country's history, the other challenge is newer.

Near our apartment we see luxury cars inching their way through narrow lanes originally designed for bicycles. These fine cars squeezing through small spaces serve as a continual reminder of how rapidly life has changed. Even since we arrived

Two WORLDS

in 2015, this city has become increasingly dotted with shopping centres, cinema complexes and large new homes.

The accessibility of the internet and the ease of international travel have allowed some from our location to see how others around the world live—and now they want it all too: education, money, good jobs, possessions, and travel. They will work hard and not always honestly, to get these things, and they aspire for their children to have better lives than they do. When people do ‘believe in God’ (the local term for becoming a Christian), they often fall away from their initial commitment for related reasons, such as the pressure of long work hours in pursuit of material success.

Where gospel ministry fits

We serve at a Bible college where most of the students don’t fit either into the traditional world of spirits, or the new world of materialism. They are young second-generation Christians who want to serve back in their local rural communities, usually far away from the city. Most are from ethnic minorities who have lived a simple subsistence life. Many have never seen the inside of a cinema or been on a holiday. We recently had some students over for dinner and discovered that some of them had never eaten with knives and forks. Not surprisingly, most of these students can’t wait to get back to their own homes and villages.

But not all our students want to return to where they came from. Vic* is in his final year. He and his wife come from a village close to our northern border. They are from different ethnic minorities and have two small boys. They have decided to stay here in the city after graduation, even though they find that life here is hard work. They want to reach out to those Christians coming from the country who get ‘lost’ in the city and lose connection with their faith. They also want to mobilise the ethnic minority Christians to reach out to their majority group neighbours while they are here.

Please pray for them as they start on this journey after Vic’s graduation this year. He’ll be involved in church planting with other graduates who want to reach out to the many university students in the city, in an area where there is no local church presence.

And our role? We are here to equip the students at our Bible college with good knowledge of the Word. We also want to inspire them to prayerfully consider the many opportunities to serve God in this country, including work beyond going back to their rural homes. One of our first graduates is heading to a nearby country to do a Masters degree. He’ll be the first to study in English and may return here to teach.

Making a change here requires a long-term vision to use whatever means are available to advance the gospel. Getting into this country and then being allowed to remain here is a challenge for cross-cultural workers. But it has been our privilege to be part of how God is working amongst his people here.

pray



As Leanne and Malcolm ask, please pray that Bible college graduates will have an expanded vision to reach their country and the world with the good news of gospel freedom.

*Names changed for privacy reasons.



GIVING *thanks* TO GOD

ZENA LONG

We give thanks to the Lord for the life and service of his servant, Zena (Suzeen) Long, who died in Sydney on 5 July, aged 100. Zena and her husband Gilbert, who died in 2011, served the Lord with CMS in Dodoma, Tanzania from 1984-85, in the Diocese of Central Tanganyika. Suzeen (as she was known) used her office training to work in administrative and secretarial roles in the diocese. After their years in Tanzania, she and Gilbert lived in Yackandandah, and later in aged care facilities in Sydney. Zena maintained her fellowship with the Lord Jesus throughout her earthly life. We praise God for her life, and Gilbert's, and pray for her daughter, Mamie, who has been Zena's mainstay in recent years.

BRIAN HIGGINBOTHAM

We praise God for the life of Brian Higginbotham, who went to be with Christ on 6 July, aged 88. He and his wife Gwen went to serve with CMS in Tanzania in 1962. Brian was chaplain to the English-speaking congregation of St Nicholas' Cathedral in Mwanza. Later they moved to Katoke Teachers' Training College, to the west of Lake Victoria. They concluded their time in Tanzania in 1967 and returned to Sydney. In 1969 they briefly moved to Gunabalanya in the NT to take up a gospel opportunity, but for health reasons returned to ministry in Sydney. The Lord had another ministry for them, and in 1969 they moved to Gunabalanya in the NT. In Sydney, Brian was the minister of several parishes including Dundas, Drummoyne and Petersham. We ask God to comfort Gwen, daughter Kathy and their extended family and friends.

JESUS REPLIED: 'LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR *heart* AND WITH ALL YOUR *soul* AND WITH ALL YOUR *mind*.' THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT. AND THE SECOND IS LIKE IT: '*love your neighbour as yourself*.'

MATTHEW 22:37-39

PRAYER DIARY UPDATES



DAY 4
DAVID & PRUE BOYD from CMS Victoria are commencing final Home Assignment in September, finishing in December 2022.



DAY 10
JEROME & INDRA from CMS NSW & ACT completed final Home Assignment in June.



DAY 6
NICK & REBEKAH from CMS NSW & ACT welcome their son Peter who was born 15 June.



DAY 14
DANIEL & KATE MORRIS from CMS NSW & ACT are commencing final Home Assignment in September, finishing in January 2023.

DAY 12 – CMS 2022 COURSE 2 TRAINEES

Cut and paste this on page 37 of your 2022 CMS Prayer Diary.



JEREMY & JILL HORROCKS
(CMS NSW & ACT)
Location to be determined.



MATT & ELLEN TYLER
with Thomas, Elizabeth & Harry
(CMS NSW & ACT)
Planning to serve in Vanuatu.



C & L
with A, A & S
(CMS NSW & ACT)
Location to be determined.

MISSIONARY spotlight



Tavis & Kate Beer

Read more here:



As we look back over our time with our northern neighbours, we feel extremely grateful to God for providing a way for us to use our gifts to help others to respond to God's love for them. We also feel grateful for CMS. The society provides a valuable gospel partnership between churches in Victoria (in our case) and the NT Diocese, which, in turn, enabled this relational expression of gospel love for our precious Aboriginal neighbours.



CMS missionaries and representatives from remote NT communities at a Leaders Conference.



Ian & Narelle Hadfield

Read more here:



One of the great advantages of serving in Asia is that religion is important to people. When you fly with Indonesian national carrier Garuda Indonesia, in the inflight magazine, there are six prayers to pray before you take off, one prayer for each official religion. To be an Indonesian you must have a religion stated on your identity card, you cannot have 'no religion'. Religion in South East Asia is part of a person's identity much more than in Australia. This means having spiritual discussions in Asia is so much easier than having a discussion in Australia.



Ian runs a baptism service at St George's Church, Singapore.



CMS is a fellowship of Christian people and churches committed to global mission. We work together to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our vision is for *a world that knows Jesus*.

OUR MISSION



OUR DISTINCTIVES



BIBLE-BASED



GOSPEL PRIORITY



IN-DEPTH
TRAINING



LONG-TERM
FOCUS

Read the full CMS vision: cms.org.au/vision

GET INVOLVED

Go to cms.org.au/get-involved



pray

Visit cms.org.au/get-involved/pray to find out more



care

Visit cms.org.au/get-involved/care to find out more



give

Visit give.cms.org.au



go

Visit cms.org.au/go or contact your local branch (see back page) to talk to someone about becoming a missionary.

Summer Conferences 2023

CMS Summer Conferences are part of our vision for *a world that knows Jesus*.
A chance to hear from God's word, meet missionaries, spend time with brothers
and sisters in Christ, and shape your mission plans for the year.

Subject to COVID-19 restrictions.



Save the date in your calendar now!

cms.org.au/summer-conferences

CMS QNSW
SUMMER SCHOOL
6-11 JANUARY
2023

CMS NSW & ACT
SUMMER SCHOOL
7-13 JANUARY
2023

CMS TAS
SUMMerview
12-14 JANUARY
2023

CMS VIC
SUTS
19 -21 JANUARY
2023

CMS SANT
SUMMER CONFERENCE
21 JANUARY
2023



CMS (Church Missionary Society) works with churches to set apart, equip and support long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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