



West Java Gospel Work



The Reformed Church in Pelalangan has an active work among young people.

community leaders were moved by a sense of justice and called for tolerance and even protection of the converts. Today there are tens of thousands of Reformed and evangelical Christians in West Java, all in self-sufficient churches.

Biblical Growth

We visited one of the oldest Sundanese congregations in an area called “Pelalangan.” Its membership of over 900 is all either converts or descendants of converts. Today it is actively involved in gospel radio listener follow-up. This and other churches began as faithful NZV missionaries worked diligently to train locals for pastoral work as well as elders and deacons for wholistic, indigenous ministries. The church grew as seed planting missionaries, servants of Christ, eagerly made themselves redundant by preparing locals to take over spiritual leadership. With the Gospel came a different outlook on life, which brought converts to diligently excel in work, health and environmental care and education. The impact of the churches on their commu-

TTrue Gospel work begins and continues with whole-hearted commitment to fallen man’s desperate need for God’s saving grace in Christ. This can only be based on full confidence in the integrity of the Bible as God’s revealed Word to humanity, culminating in Christ’s incarnation and ministry on earth and continued ministry in heaven. Such has always been the empowering foundation of true missionary endeavors.

Reformation Power

The European Reformation awakened the Church to the Great Commission and the world’s need for the true message of the Gospel. Islam retreated from Europe and its world military and political power shrank. This facilitated the work of faithful missionaries to take the

Gospel back to its birthplace in the Middle East and beyond to other Muslim-dominated lands.

Missionary F.A. Anthing was sent in 1851 by GUIZ (Genootschap van In-en Uitwendige Zending te Batavia) to bring the Gospel to the west of the Indonesian island of Java. This is the home of diehard Sundanese Muslims. The Sundanese are the second largest ethnic language group in Indonesia after the Javanese. Persistent, faithful Gospel work celebrated the baptism of two Sundanese converts in 1855—a humble but significant beginning.

Fruitful Suffering

In 1862, another missionary endeavor, NZV (Nederlandse Zending Vereeniging), was established among the Sundanese

people. Small groups of converts formed local fellowships which gradually flourished to become organized congregations. The pressures of the Muslim communities on missionaries and converts were immense. Yet, the Holy Spirit provided the necessary grace to withstand persecution: Gospel conviction and the willingness to “fellowship” in Christ’s sufferings (Phil. 3:10). In time, more and more Sundanese people showed openness to the Gospel, and some



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nities is such that even the many small mosques built by funds from Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich Arab states, have not stopped the slow but steady flow of converts to it.

Word and Deed

In the West Java capital city of Bandung we visited a very large and highly-respected Christian hospital, R. S. Immanuel. Pastor Egne, who chairs its Board of Directors, also serves on the Board of Allamahaba, MERF’s daughter organization in Java. It is most encouraging to see not only the hospital’s vast medical service to the community but also its uncompromising

biblical message: “*Serving in name of Christ the Savior.*” Each of the many hospital departments and wards demonstrates Gospel power to scores of local Muslim patients and their families and friends. The Gospel message is announced alongside good medical care. Pastor Egne emphasizes the need to resist powerful pressures to follow the trends of the “social gospel.” He says: “*There are many Islamic and secular groups that provide medical services to our Sunda people; unless ours has a Gospel message we should close down the hospital.*”

Vital Partnerships

MERF now partners with churches in West Java to use radio and internet-based ministries to reach Muslims. A project is also underway to train Sundanese evangelists for church planting in rural areas under the oversight of faithful church committees. Today most Sundanese Muslims are very nominal, and the religious ones know very little Koran and Islamic teaching. Praise God for these open doors for work in West Java. In other areas of Indonesia, MERF partners similarly with faithful brethren in the Javanese, Makassarese, Bugis, and

Toraja languages.

Prayer Requests:

- ✦ Give thanks for MERF’s continuing strategic Arabic Media Ministries. Pray for additional faithful volunteers being trained for this fruitful work in Cyprus, Lebanon, and Jordan.
- ✦ Give thanks for the Lord’s blessing on the training of South Sudanese and other East African workers in MERF’s Center in Lokichoggio, Kenya. Pray for South Sudanese pastors and churches promoting lasting peace within the strife-ridden country.

Top: From left, Mr. Sunardi, Pastor Suhairman, Elder Fery, with Pastors Egne and Armin of MERF Indonesia—all of Muslim background; **Bottom Left:** An old photo of a group of missionaries to West Java; **Bottom Right:** A copper engraving of the Good Samaritan hangs in the lobby of Immanuel Hospital.

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While the Gospel has redemptive implications for all areas of life, its main purpose is to reconcile sinful man to the Sovereign, Holy God; it is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.” This Gospel is not relativized by human culture, but rather transcends and redeems it. (Article J, MERF Statement of Faith)

