

“By God’s great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

I P E T E R 1 : 3 B

The Easter Message Reaches Year Around



JOHN
CAMPBELL-NELSON

I recently flew to East Timor for a week of teaching a group of lay preachers who were being prepared to administer the sacraments and provide pastoral care to the many tiny groups of Protestant Christians scattered throughout the mountains of East Timor. The Protestant Church of East Timor (IPTL) grew a good deal during the Indonesian occupation due to the presence and money of Indonesian protestants, but is now left with an unsustainable structure, empty churches in some areas and Christians, but no churches in others. They are in a long process of death and resurrection, and Global Ministries has been one of their most faithful partners in the struggle.

From East Timor I flew to the island of Ambon, where I worked with an interfaith program of “Preaching Peace,” which involves pulpit exchanges between Christian and Muslim preachers. This is one of many creative responses by local people of faith to the devastating communal conflict that wrecked the area in the early 2000s. I worked with my friend Abidin, who is vice chair of the Muslim council in Ambon. He grew up in an area where Muslims and Christians had lived together in friendship for centuries and has spent much of the last ten years working tirelessly to restore those friendships.

As you can see, a lot of our work is being done among post-conflict communities. While churches here are often slow to respond to social events (as they were in the original crises 10 years ago), the churches are very good at providing the long-term commitment and care that is needed to restore these communities to life. The churches continue to plug away at healing the hidden wounds and listening to the silent voices of the victims.

We cannot overstate the power that the idea of resurrection has among traumatized Christian communities in Eastern Indonesia. It gives them the strength to strive for a future different than the one dictated to them by a history of terror and grief. When I work with these people I am convinced that the power of the life of Jesus is not confined to “long ago and far away,” but a very present reality.

Together we pray for the hope and strength of the faithful people of Indonesia who help heal the wounds of trauma in so many.

John Campbell-Nelson serves as a Global Ministries Missionary as professor with the Evangelical Church of West Timor.

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