

Christians Amidst the Bali Massacre

Colleagues,

In 1999 Marie and I were the clergy couple serving an English Language congregation on the island of Bali in Indonesia. We lived just a few blocks north of the site of last weekend's cataclysm. Our church bldg was just a few blocks east.

Some of our colleagues from that time continue to serve there. One pair is a fellow Concordia Seminary alum from the 1950s, Bill Hansen, and his wife Margaret. More than one of Bill's illustrious "Class of 1952" have broken from the "Missouri mould," and traipsed off into non-conformist ministries. In Bill's case, he didn't "take a call" in 1952, but wandered off into worker-priest venues—unheard of back then—and wound up in Anchorage, Alaska, running an automobile hubcap business [I kid you not!] and working as peripatetic evangelist. In his early 70s he and Margaret came to Bali as "faith missionaries." We met them there. They've been there ever since doing strange and wonderful things. Lots of teaching and preaching and also actually washing the feet of the poorest of the poor and feeding them. Does that remind you of someone you know?

We e-mailed them after we heard the news. They responded: "Thank you for your note. We are still in Bali and are fine. It is a tough time for many people here, and the inevitable fall-off in tourism will create hardship for many people in the future, but God is alive and watching over all of us. We are weighing our options of staying and leaving. Pray that God will give us understanding and obedience to His will."

Another colleague is Ed Trotter, pastor in the Uniting Church of

Australia, who spends large chunks of each year as street evangelist and Good Samaritan in the Kuta district where the explosion occurred. On Monday we received this from him:

Your expression of interest and compassion for Bali, and your prayers, are overwhelming. Thanks, from the depths of my heart. You'll probably keep up to date through news media with the scene. To add to your ongoing prayer:

- 1. The obvious consolation for families and friends of the victims, foreign and local. Many bodies too unrecognizable. Still numbers of missing persons.*
- 2. Australian authorities seem to be evacuating all foreigners in need of medical treatment. That process should be pretty much completed today. Due to security reasons, Indonesian victims will have to stay behind here and be subject to unbelievably inadequate facilities. they ran out of disinfectant [?] yesterday; there's no proper treatment available for burns. You've probably seen footage of wounded burnt bodies. Trauma is another thing again!*
- 3. It was fantastic that many Christians and other volunteers have been at the hospitals attending tirelessly to the wounded. Without them, it would've been an even more massive disaster. Our help was required to assist in transport of patients to the airport.*

Another wakeup call.

Even after September 11th, we think it probably won't happen in "our town." Bali is in shock. the main street of Kuta, Jalan Legian, looks like a war zone. It is a war zone! While life seems back to normal quickly, it is now a different place.

The economy will probably be decimated, bringing unbelievable

hardship to the Balinese, who've been increasingly dependent on tourism and associated foreign investment.

But it is the reaction of the Balinese, once they take stock of the situation, that needs prayer. While there is an increasing sense of solidarity with Aussies and other foreigners, because they have suffered as Bali's guests, it is the non-Balinese Indonesians who are nervous and uncertain of their future here. There has been long term animosity under the smiling surface, between Balinese (90% Hindu) and especially Javanese (usually = Muslim).

Ironically, even Ambonese, already here in refuge from their own [Christian-Muslim]war zone [on the island of Ambon], are considering returning there!

The Lord is sovereign and compassionate, allowing what will ultimately be for our best as well as for the glory of his name. Isaiah 44 [= the prophet's ridicule of a craftsman fashioning an image with his own hands and then prostrating himself before it as his god] happened to be one of my scripture passages this morning. Bali's economy and culture derives from such idolatry. He wants the best for them, and I know His heart breaks until these precious people come to know the true and living God. Please in your prayers, remember that the Balinese are still "an unreached people group."

However, in the last year especially, every Christian denomination, including our English-speaking ministries, is experiencing a season of favour and increase.

Please also remember the perpetrators of this evil, according to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:43-48 ["Love your enemies..."].

Someone said the safest place in the world to be is in the

centre of God's will. The bomb in Kuta exploded about one & a half kilometres from my room that I've been renting in a Balinese compound for the past 5 years. Apparently some debris landed on the street outside. Although the street is closed to vehicles, our morning prayer services yesterday [Sunday Oct. 13] went ahead, with a powerful motivation to pray, a few hundred metres from where the tragedy had occurred just hours before.

Pray for opportunities to minister with friends and neighbours during the aftermath. Most are shocked, sad, uncertain or fearful. Already I've witnessed a Christian brother who had a miraculous escape, as he'd just passed the Sari club & entered his internet workplace nearby when the blast occurred. His internet cafe was just blown in, all the staff & customers were bleeding with wounds from spraying glass and debris. He remained physically untouched. Ironically again, he's from Ambon.

I believe the Lord had my travel plans rearranged to be here for a while longer. I will probably fly back to Australia later this week.

Again, thank you for your ongoing love and pray for Bali.

The Lord bless you heaps.

Shalom.

Sincerely in His love and grace,

Ed

Kuta, Bali, Indonesia

October 14, 2002

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. We received a third message from Indonesia this week, from the island of Sumatra a thousand miles to the west of Bali. That's the home of the Batak Lutherans. Retired Lutheran Bishop and seminary prof Armencius Munthe (a long time buddy from days gone by when we all were grad students in Hamburg, Germany) is coming to Dallas TX in a few weeks to continue translation work he's currently doing. Why Dallas? I don't know. Are there any of you in that territory who might connect with him and practice your gift of hospitality? Let me know. His English is good. His German even better.