

The Mission Scene in Bali Today: Post-Denominational Church History 2001

Colleagues,

Two years ago at this time Marie and I were in Indonesia, serving as mission volunteers with an English Language Protestant congregation in Legian, suburb of Denpasar, the capital city of the island of Bali. Some Thursday Theologies of that era (ThTh 60 to ThTh 72) originated from that venue. One of our colleagues on Bali in those days was Eddy Trotter, an Aussie, working “half-and-half” between Australia (in a “normal” congregation) and Bali as a street evangelist. At least, that’s what I remember. Eddy was our major source for information and insight about what was going on in Bali—both on the church scene and on the political scene. We’ve kept in cyber-connection since then. Yesterday we got this update from him. The information/insight flow continues. You’ll benefit from reading it too. [Items in brackets below are my words to augment some of Eddy’s shorthand.]

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S.

On Monday Aug. 20 Marie and I are “out of here” for some time away—and we’re not taking a laptop along. We’ll be back home, d.v., after September 7. Verbum sapiente, satis est.

Subject: bali notes/eddy trotter

Date: Wed, 15 Aug 2001

Kuta Beach [The beach for economy class tourists & backpackers] Bali, Indonesia

Bali seems secure, prospering with an average of over 100,000 foreign tourists per month so far for 2001. You could produce an entire Where's Wally? volume at a single Kuta sunset setting. Hectares of hotels, shopping-malls still being developed in the more-is-better approach. Now 7 McDonalds in Kuta. Planet Hollywood to open August 24, probably a wise re-think from August 17, National Independence Day, although fittingly symbolic!

Spiritually a couple of interesting trends

A growing hunger for the Gospel is evident through everyday personal interaction and excitement rises with numerous church plants/new ministries witnessing a quicker progress than previous decades.

Second, a resurgent undercurrent of fundamentalist Hinduism, particularly among the younger generation of leaders, is causing concern within Christian denominational circles. The enemy uses fear to intimidate in the spread of the Gospel. *[Bali's religious scene is Hindu in contrast to the Muslim majority in much of the rest of Indonesia.]*

Bali's main point of vulnerability has been the port connecting with the 20-minute ferry-ride to East Java. The uprising in E.Java in May led to beefing up of military/police/naval security forces. Again with the political drama in Jakarta last month *[as president Gus Dur was forced to resign and Megawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of the "founder" of the nation, a Balinese, became president]*. Thankfully no incursions happened from Gus Dur to Mega heartlands respectively.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MINISTRY

That the Lord is raising up a network of believers who can be a catalyst for John 17 style unity and revival seems to be a conviction growing amongst the various fellowships.

The International Church phenomenon that is appearing around the world is another kind of pentecostal distinctive, i.e., it reflects the sociological dimension of Acts 2 where people from every nation under heaven were involved in that birth of the Church & foretaste of the Holy Spirit's outpouring on all flesh.

Something of that nature is beginning to happen here in Bali, an international crossroads for commerce, trade, tourism, the arts/fashion & spirituality; as well as a domestic crossroads for the many ethnos from the Indonesian archipelago.

Convergence. A fascinating seminar in June outlined 3 historical streams of Christianity—sacramental/liturgical, evangelical, pentecostal/charismatic— attempted to evaluate their strengths/weaknesses from a biblical perspective. Presenters were: from Barnabas Ministries Hugh Kaiser (Hawaii), a regular minister in Indonesia, and Canon Phillip Weeks (Virginia) of the Charismatic Episcopal Church. There is room to mutually increase our understanding & appreciation; flow as one river!

Warren Reeves, recently ministering with us, pastors the Bandung International Church [*Hereafter BIC*] in West Java. This community has witnessed exciting growth with a move of the Holy Spirit in prayer gatherings & the recognition of watchmen. Consequently numbers of indigenous Sundanese [*one of the larger of umpteen people groups inhabiting the several thousand islands that make up Indonesia*] have become believers & have been sent out as apostle/evangelists; have in turn seen hundreds of their own people come to the Lord. The strategy is divinely brilliant with the BIC acting as a catalyst. Could similar things be

intended for Bali? (The Sundanese, nearly 40 million of them, are the world's largest "unreached" people group. The Balinese are still also regarded as unreached)

1. The English Worship Service, interdenominational, meeting Sundays in the Grand Bali Beach Hotel, Sanur. [*Sanur is in the "high rent district" of Balinese tourism. The opposite of Kuta Beach.*] I've been involved with this ministry since my first year in Bali, 1987. Currently the fellowship is seeking to invite a full-time pastor, probably through Christian Mission Alliance. (I'd been tempted to consider this position but believe that it's the Lord's plan for me to be here just half the year)
2. Legian Church, Kuta Beach comes under the umbrella of the Bali Christian Protestant denom, the largest in Bali. Located in the midst of Kuta's mayhem & need. It's been going since 1994 and is currently enjoying significant growth. Its vision is determined locally, & it's serviced by visiting short-term pastors. [*Legian was "our church" in 1999.*] Rev Lyle Predmore (Disciples of Christ, USA, former missionary in Japan) now with us until the end of September. Lyle is a beaut pastor; is accompanied by his delightful wife Hiroko. You can check us out at: <<http://www.geocities.com/balichurch/church.html>>
3. Bukit Doa (=Hill of Prayer) Church, Nusa Dua, also with the Bali Protestant church. Situated on a reserve with 4 other religious buildings (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Catholic), as a P.R effort by Jakarta to promote the image of tolerance. Also adjacent to large resort area; new expat/middle-class real estate. Current visiting pastor is Rev Wendell Karsen (Reformed Church, USA, former missionary in Hong Kong) who helped establish the congregation in 1999. Wendell, a gifted facilitator & teacher, is back with his wife Renske. A committed core with growing

membership again within a typically transient community.

4. Bali International Church, Renon, in Denpasar's Eastern suburbs. A bilingual church pastored by Rev Wayan Dwinje & Gayle. Associated with Baithani churches here & CCC (Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Australia). Effective ministry with students & refugees.
5. Sanur. Another new work just started August 5, founded by Rev John Malanowsky (USA), who's just recently come to Bali after 26 years in Central Java. Is also establishing a Bible school.
6. Full Gospel Businessman's Fellowship International has recently commenced an English chapter here. (4 already exist in Bahasa Indonesia [=Indonesian language]). While waning in Australia, FGBMFI remains a vibrant, growing movement throughout Indonesia.

For Legian & Nusa Dua, the baton for co-ordinating the schedule for visiting ministries is passing from Rev W.L. Armstrong (a Texan Methodist, a senior minister with 18 years experience in Sumatra; a facilitator who sees a need & simply gets the job done) to Rev Tom Aitken (a Virginian Methodist). Tom is an irrepressible Charismatic, was in Legian this year & hopes to be re-appearing in 2002 & beyond.

An extraordinary kaleidoscope of reps from the Body of Christ, both visiting/local ministries, plus those in transit, continues coming through, each leaving their unique impact. Enriching! Although it's throwing good church growth theory to the wind.

The English language network is but one of the facets of God's work here in Bali.

There are about 50 Christian denominations/ministries operating in the capital city Denpasar alone.

3 weeks ago Crocodile Dundee 3 opened in cinemas across Jakarta.

The same week there was a relatively quiet transition of political power to a new president. In between bombings of churches anyway. THE CALM BETWEEN THE STORMS? (There have been 85 bomb blasts in Indonesia this year, at least half had Christian targets.)

Extremist elements with mid-Eastern backing, via connections in Afghanistan, Malaysia, S. Philippines seem keen to pursue a jihad against Christianity/Western values, throughout Indonesia. Was Gus Dur the right person in the wrong place? Apart from his erratic style, his increasingly frequent consultation with the dead, including a message he received for his Australian visit from the spiritual realm, was not a healthy trend.

Will Megawati succeed in leading the nation out of despair & poverty? Or is she a puppet of the unseen forces? Has the TNI *[the party of the old regime]* won this round by default? That Wiranto's name was being considered in official circles as a vice-presidential contender is ominous. *[Wiranto is the military general who oversaw the "cleansing" of East Timor when we were there in 1999.]* That he was one of the first to knock on the door of Mega's office on her first day in business doesn't look promising. Fugitive Tommy Suharto's [son of the former iron-fisted president, now on the lam as a convicted crook] menacing mafia-style terrorism doesn't bode well at this stage. There is a long haul to resolution of conflict in the restive provinces. We pray that true justice & peace will come to – the Malukuan provinces (inc. Ambon), where the jihad continues in the world's worst current civil war. But who cares!?

West Papua *[the western half of the huge island of Papua-New Guinea, simply annexed by Indonesia after they took control of the islands of the Dutch East Indies]* with its significant Christian population, a potential for launching a jihad there exploiting secessionist moves.– Aceh, the verandah of Mecca-

Poso (Central Sulawesi), Riau etc. *[All of these are hotspots where "the natives are restless"—most often for independence from Indonesia.]*

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR FAMILY IN INDONESIA/the persecuted church & the healing of this great land. Continued opportunities for the Gospel. (Thanks heaps!)

ONE, FATHER, . . THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW. Jesus praying.