

# asian report

A MINISTRY OF ASIAN OUTREACH

THIS ISSUE:

## Spiritual Development South East Asia

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

### An Ocean of Opportunity & Adventure!

Francis Tsui focuses on the historic destiny and present day opportunities of the South East Asian Region - these dynamic and diverse nations of Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and East Timor. Home to 380 million people, this region encapsulates the challenges and needs of Asia today...

OTHER STORIES

An Agent of Hope / A New Era for Malaysia / Double the Impact / A Life Not In Vain / Good Changes Are Coming and much more inside.





# AN OCEAN OF OPPORTUNITY & ADVENTURE!

**A** CROSS ASIA ONE CANNOT FIND ANOTHER REGION THAT IS SO SURROUNDED BY WATER AS THE SOUTHEASTERN CORNER OF THIS VAST CONTINENT. ALL THE NATIONS IN THIS REGION, NAMELY INDONESIA, THE PHILIPPINES, MALAYSIA, BRUNEI, EAST TIMOR AND SINGAPORE, ARE ALL DEPENDANT ON THEIR COASTLINES TO DEFINE MOST OF THEIR NATIONAL BOUNDARIES.

Across these oceans we see people movement like never before, either for political or economic necessity, or even because of missionary zeal. Indonesia and the Philippines have sent out tens of thousands of domestic workers, not only to their neighboring countries, but as far away as Canada and the Middle East. Singapore and Malaysia, on the other hand, receive a lot of migrant workers from across Asia. In the case of Malaysia, millions arrive not only with a chance to improve their livelihood, but they may also encounter an opportunity to have their lives transformed. For those who might not have had a chance to hear the Good News in their native land, there are now many outreaches sharing with them about Jesus.

Singapore and Malaysia also send out many Christian missionaries — in traditional and creative ways; long term as well as short term. Indeed, this whole Southeast Asia region is most vibrant in faith matters: traditional folk religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity are all part of the spiritual landscape here.

Indonesia is known to be the largest Islamic country in the world, with over 200 million Muslims. Yet, there is also a growing Christian community, which, unofficially, already hovers around 20% of the total population. Christianity has a long history in the islands, with Portuguese Jesuits and Dominicans operating in the Malukus, southern Sulawesi, and Timor in the sixteenth century. When the Dutch defeated Portugal in 1605, however, Catholic missionaries were expelled and the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence in the region for 300 years. Currently, the majority of Christians there are Protestants of one affiliation or another, with particularly large concentrations found in Sumatra, Irian Jaya, Maluku, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Yet, much harvest is still to be gathered.

The Philippines is like a reverse image of Indonesia, where Roman Catholics and Protestants dominate the general population, yet with a growing Muslim influence, especially in the south. Islam is one of the oldest organized religions established in the Philippines, reaching the islands in the 14th century with the arrival of Indian, Malay and Javanese merchants, and Arab missionaries from various sultanates in the Malay Archipelago. Overall, among the different faith groups, opportunity abounds for bringing spiritual transformation and development.

The spiritual make-up in this region encapsulates the multi-dimensional challenges and opportunities of the 21st century global mission landscape. It also presents churches and Christians in the region with a fertile harvest field.

Recently I was with a group of our Great Commission Institute (GCI) church planter trainers, mainly from Malaysia and Singapore — some of them serving full time, some participating as adjunct faculty with a strong marketplace background. They are excited not only for their own involvement in this Kingdom venture, but that their local churches can come in as partners as well. One of the trainers, who is also a leader in his own church, thanked Asian Outreach for opening a door of opportunity for his church to partner with our efforts in their neighboring countries. Across the oceans, in this part of Asia, people that are called to be “fishers of men” are responding readily and joyfully.

Two millenniums ago Jesus asked Simon Peter to put out his boat into the deep and let down the nets. Peter was hesitant. But when he complied and did it, he “caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” (Luke 5: 6). Just like Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee during His ministry on earth — teaching the masses by the shores, and promising to make His disciples fishers of men — Christian workers now traverse this part of the continent, crisscrossing the seas and waters. What an opportunity and what an adventure. Abundant harvests await and there is no time for hesitation.



# SOUTH EAST ASIA

**Brunei** – one of the richest nations in Asia. Population 389,000. 67% Muslim, 13% Buddhist, 10% Christian. Strict controls on Christian work and education.

**Indonesia** – the world's 4th most populous nation at 240 million. Consists of 17,000 islands and 726 languages. It is the largest Muslim nation in the world. The estimated number of Christians is between 15 – 25%, predominantly from minority groups.

**Malaysia** – has a vibrant population of nearly 26 million. The state religion is Islam, with 20% Buddhist, 6% Hindu and 10% Christian.

**Singapore** – is the world's 2nd most densely populated independent country. Predominantly Buddhist, it has seen a significant rise in Christian growth to around 15% of the population.

**Philippines** – over 10% of the population live and work overseas. 80% are from a Catholic background, yet the Muslim minority seeks to set up an independent Islamic state in the south.

**East Timor** – recently made independent, it is one of the poorest nations in Asia. Most of the nation's 1.2 million people are Catholic.

(Statistics from en.wikipedia.org, operationworld.org, and Voice of the Martyrs)

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# SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERING WITH LOCAL CHURCHES TO DEVELOP THEIR UNIQUE VISION AND MINISTRY.



## Church Planting, Worker Support and Training

Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand, Bhutan, Malaysia



## Church Building

Nepal, China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Vietnam



## Short Term Missions

Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Nepal, Cambodia, India



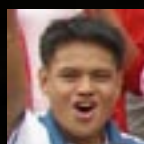
## Prayer and Church Networking

China, India, Hong Kong, Tibet, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, USA, Australia, UK, Japan



## AN AGENT OF HOPE

By James Foo, CEO of Great Commission Institute (GCI)



Nicanor (Nick) is from the village of Bukidnon in Mindanao, Philippines. He is married, with five children, and used to be a sailor, often being away from home for most of the year. About four years ago Nick felt that it was important to spend more time with his family so he returned to Bukidnon to be a farmer. He enjoyed bumper crops and his relationship with the Lord also grew stronger.

However, he increasingly felt called by God to plant a church in his village, so others could come to know Christ and develop in their walk with Him. Nick followed this vision, yet found it to be very challenging — pastoring a growing church and farming at the same time was not easy. He realized though that the main need he faced was the lack of Biblical training. But all the Bible colleges were too far away in the cities. He prayed for an answer to this challenge and then heard about Asian Outreach's mobile training ministry called GCI. When this training came to a venue near where Nick lives, he was able to begin the three levels of training. Immediately Nick began to see greater effectiveness and breakthrough in his ministry. He says, "Lessons like leadership, conflict management, cults and prayer have really helped me to become a better minister of the gospel." Nick's vision is to see the church he is pastoring become a lighthouse for the whole community. "I want to see everyone in my village come to know this Jesus that I believe in. Only Jesus can offer hope." Asian Outreach is partnering with Nick to see this vision become a reality.

# A NEW ERA FOR MALAYSIA

**O**VER THE LAST TWO DECADES THE MALAYSIAN CHURCH HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED FROM DEPENDENCY ON FOREIGN SUPPORT TO ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN MISSIONS, INCLUDING SENDING OUT HOMEGROWN MISSIONARIES TO BLESS THE NATIONS. I CALL THIS TRANSFORMATION “THE ANTIOCH CHURCH ANOINTING” (ACTS 13: 1-3).

AO Malaysia has contributed to this metamorphosis by challenging, facilitating and mobilizing mission trips. We have also partnered with local churches throughout Malaysia — pioneering together locally and abroad. We are so grateful for this church support and have also been privileged to help churches develop their own missionary visions and programs.

Since 1990 we have seen hundreds of Malaysian believers mobilized throughout Asia. In China we have provided Bibles and much needed leadership training. In 1992, together with Malaysian and international churches, we were involved in pioneering the “Boat of Hope” ministry in Cambodia — providing free medical care and the Good News to thousands in villages along the Mekong River. This initial outreach then led to sending trainers from Malaysian churches to help coach local pastors and leaders to disciple their new converts. Around the same time, with tremendous support from our local churches, many young leaders in Sri Lanka were equipped with effective pastoral and leadership skills.

As the Malaysian church began to pray, to give and to go, God responded by opening yet another door into the Himalayan region, comprising India, Bhutan and Nepal. Today, AO India has planted 50 churches and 8 outreaches and the Santhali (an outcast tribe) church is bursting at its seams. In the last 13 years the Nepal ministry has grown to include local evangelism and church planting, a children’s home, feeding street kids, and a ministry to 20,000 Tibetans in Boudha. A ministry to dwellers in the slums, and a project to set up a vocational school are also on the drawing board. A Malaysian church is also partnering with us to construct a prayer tower in Siliguri, West Bengal. In addition, a prayer movement for Tibet was begun and today more than a thousand intercessors are praying for this ethnic group.

By Eric Fung, Executive Director  
Asian Outreach Malaysia

On the local front, in Malaysia itself, the church has also responded to help us train church leaders in the interior of Sabah and Sarawak states. About 58,000 students there have successfully completed our Living Word Correspondence Course, with thousands coming to faith in Christ. Another 2,245 students are still studying the Course. Five years ago the Lord led a church here to send Ps. Benny Ng to work with us in a new area in Sibul, Sarawak. Since then Ps. Ng has been faithfully challenging, training and mobilizing the local Chinese, English and Bahasa Malaysia speaking churches for missions. He has coordinated visits by foreign teams from South Africa, Hong Kong, and West Malaysia to help minister to the interior churches. Two churches, a Christian preparatory school, and a language resource studio have been built.

Just as the Christians in Antioch, 2000 years ago, were desperate to hear God’s plans and receive His commissioning, so today the church in Malaysia is ready and eager to venture into new horizons. “The Antioch Anointing” is not waning and AO Malaysia will be there to partner with them in this new era of missions.



# DOUBLE THE IMPACT!

By Laura Choo-Ler, General Manager,  
Asian Outreach Singapore

**R**ECENTLY I MET UP WITH A FRIEND'S FATHER WHO IS A VETERAN IN THE AREA OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. HE QUIETLY REMARKED, "YES, THERE ARE MANY ORGANIZATIONS DOING GOOD WORK IN MISSIONS. BUT FAR TOO MANY ARE DOING THE WORK INDEPENDENTLY."

Collaboration, or kingdom networking, is nothing new. In fact, no one would discount the value of pooling our resources together for God's work. Yet perhaps many hesitate to collaborate because of the daunting challenges of working through the multi-faceted issues and agendas that different parties bring.

In the nations where our ministries are, Asian Outreach is not focused on planting our own denominational churches. Instead our heart and ultimate aim is to work alongside local indigenous churches to develop their own unique vision and ministry. To see them succeed.

As a mobilization center here in Singapore, we cannot emphasize interdependence enough. We appreciate the unique mission vision that God has given to different churches. In our partnering with churches we essentially network, co-create, and synergize together with what God is laying upon our hearts to do. It cannot be about one party gaining at another's expense, but that together we unleash our potential for missions.

One of Asian Outreach's core values is kingdom networking. This ethos is central to our ministry because it honors Christ as the Head of this Body with its diverse and unique members. Psalm 133 reflects on how good and pleasant this unity is.

What is the value of partnering together? There is a Chinese idiom that espouses, "half the effort for double the outcome." Rather than duplicating the work, re-inventing the wheel, and not maximizing our resources and time, we leverage on one another's strengths. We quintessentially match values, skills, and even create matching funds where necessary.

In a nutshell, we partner with others to mobilize people, prayer and finance to empower the indigenous leaders and people in the fields. Working alongside churches we help send their church members out into strategic placements in Asia, as well as providing consultancy and resources for their mission's vision and infrastructure. We have also been privileged to provide specialist

opportunities in the areas of crisis relief, advocacy, leadership training, prayer information, and facilitating teams for the needs in the fields. In responding to the 2008 catastrophes in China and Myanmar, Trinity Christian Centre, one of our Singaporean partners, believes that "missions is all about caring and connecting." As such, this church has partnered with Asian Outreach to bring hope and healing to the victims of unprecedented natural disasters.

Paul emphasizes in Philippians 2:4, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Asian Outreach loves to work alongside others — to network, to partner, to co-create together for God's Kingdom — developing and empowering each other's unique vision and ministry.



# A LIFE NOT IN VAIN

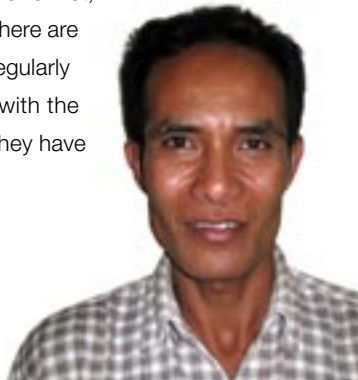
By Kerrie-Anne Butler,  
Communications Manager,  
AO International

**O**N THE 3RD OF APRIL THIS YEAR, ASIAN OUTREACH LOST ONE OF OUR FAITHFUL CHURCH PLANTERS TO MALARIA. LUKAS WAS ONLY 34 YEARS OLD. ORIGINALLY FROM TIMOR, HE HAD BEEN PART OF THE ASIAN OUTREACH FAMILY IN INDONESIA FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS.

He was based in Kuala Kurun, Central Kalimantan, as part of a holistic team working alongside unreached people. The team pioneered a vibrant church in this area and also served the community by running a kindergarten. However, not all the local villagers have been happy to welcome them, and the team is regularly threatened with rape and death, beaten, and subject to spiritual oppression from local witch doctors.

The day before he died Lukas sent a text message to one of his fellow church planters saying, "I came into this world with nothing, and I leave with nothing. All I take with me is my faithfulness to Christ." Lukas' life displayed this extraordinary commitment to the cause of Christ, even to the point where he was willing to die. He is not alone. There are many workers on the field in Kalimantan, and around Asia, who regularly face persecution, disease, and extreme conditions. They live with the understanding that death may be around the corner, but while they have breath, they will work to serve Christ.

Lukas exemplified the words of Paul in Philippians, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." His courage and dedication is an inspiration to us. We honor our friend and co-worker. The short but fruitful life he lived was not in vain.



## YOU CAN BE A FRONTLINE PIONEER TOO!

All over Asia people like Lukas and Nick are literally risking all to evangelize and plant churches. We call them "foot soldiers." They often work in dangerous, remote and restricted areas. You and I can also pioneer with them on the frontlines of Asia. Sure we probably can't go where they go, or cope with the harsh conditions they serve in. However, for them to be effective it is crucial that we partner with them in prayer and support.

Therefore we have established an Asian Frontline Foot Soldiers Matching Fund to help provide for their basic living needs and training. Every dollar given to this Fund will be matched and at least doubled. These heroes of faith are prepared to lay down their lives to share the Good News to unreached people groups. It is an honor to match their inspiring commitment.

Please designate donations to Asian Frontline Foot Soldiers Matching Fund and either send them through your local Asian Outreach office or to Asian Outreach International, GPO Box 3448, Hong Kong.

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Asian Outreach is an evangelical, interdenominational ministry to the peoples of Asia. It is our earnest desire to use your freewill missionary offering as designated, with a minimum of organizational overhead and a maximum of prayerful stewardship. Should any one project be over designated, Asian Outreach reserves the right to use those funds in fulfillment of the goal of Winning Asians for Christ — Asians Winning for Christ. All gifts will be receipted and our latest audited annual report is available upon request.

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# GOOD CHANGES ARE COMING



CHINA  
WATCH



BY DAVID WANG, PRESIDENT EMERITUS

**A** FRIEND IS DOING HER PHD IN A UNIVERSITY INSIDE CHINA, STUDYING “COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS.” IN HER RESEARCH SHE HAS OBTAINED SOME DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY HIGHLY REPUTABLE CHINESE SCHOLARS AND PROFESSORS REPORTING ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF CHINA. SOME OF THESE RESEARCHERS WERE ASSIGNED BY CHINA’S ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES. SOME WERE ACTUALLY COMMISSIONED BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

**These scholars are mostly Western educated and non-Christian. Their research is scientific and extensive. Their findings are quite consistent:**

- In China there are three major strands of the Christian church: the Three-Self State sanctioned church, the rural house church, and the urban “new-rising” church.
- Around 8% of China’s population are adherents of Christianity. Some provinces and regions have as high as 10%.
- Christianity (Protestant) is not only China’s fastest growing faith; in comparison its followers are also most fervent.
- Of the three, the Three-Self, although most public because of its government sanctioned status, is the least vibrant and has the slowest growth.
- Because of rapid urbanization, rural house churches are slowing down in their growth.
- The pyramid-style, patriarchal leadership structure of the house churches is giving way to an independent, yet interrelated, “local church” system. Thus her leadership crisis is most severe.
- The composition of the rural house church, which was predominantly women, the elderly, and semi-illiterate, is changing. Youth and children are joining.
- Previously 80%, if not more, of new people joining rural house churches were doing so because of healing miracles. Now they are attracted because of the clean and joyous lifestyle.
- The tension between the Three-Self and rural house church is still acute. This is not due to theological differences but due to their status. One is, in Communists’ terms, “Red,” the other, “Black.”
- The urban “new-rise” churches are made up mostly of white-collars, professionals, college students and youth. They are a positive influence in the society, and in economic development.
- These “new-rise” churches are neither legal nor illegal — therefore “Grey.” Theologically they are more tuned to their rural counter parts. In social concern and services, as well as evangelism, they are more aggressive than the Three-Self.
- The greatest lack of the church in China, as expressed by all three groups, is high-standard, open and accreditable training of their pastors, leaders, and workers.

**These findings are mostly common knowledge – at least to people who have been on the ground. But the researchers’ recommendations are revealing:**

- For Beijing to continue its “harmony in the society” drive, and to cut-down conflicts between local government agencies and Christian believers, and to eradicate cults and cultic practices, it is recommended to allow church registration outside the jurisdiction of the Three-Self.
- To ensure higher quality of China’s church as a whole, training of its leaders and workers should not be limited only to Three-Self schools, nor pushed to the underground. China’s universities can play a vital role.
- The teaching of Marxism, in regard to religions, needs to be reinterpreted according to China’s current situation.

Another finding actually challenges the root cause of the government restricting and persecuting the house church: “The house church movement, by and large, is an indigenous phenomenon. It is not necessarily instigated or sustained by external factions.” Nevertheless, for the longest time China’s xenophobic authorities have blamed the West for infiltration through its mission activities.

Local believers are sensing the effect of these top-level findings. “These researchers work for the central higher-ups. Their reports are changing the attitude of Beijing towards us. Even President Hu Jintao, in his recent speeches, is urging a non-pressure, non-conflict approach towards religious activities,” a group of Henan house church leaders told me last month.

But they are not expecting big changes overnight. This year, 2009, is a particularly supersensitive time: 60th anniversary of the New China, 50th anniversary of Tibet Liberation, 20 years after the Tiananmen incident, and the 1st anniversary of the Sichuan earthquake.

In unison Chinese believers are predicting, albeit slowly, “Good changes are coming.”