

realize that this goal is not possible?” In my “sophistication” I think that there are certain things that are more or less not possible for us to do. These disciples do not have such “sophistication” and I am grateful for that.

2. Faith that God can do anything (and in seeing miracles in correspondence to that faith) – My second observation is closely related to my first. Harliem and Vania, working with their amazing leadership team, have found it possible to set before the church seemingly any goal and the people rise to the occasion. The church here was illegal and God, through a miracle which would be too long to explain, converted a person who knew a person who got the church legal status.

3. In reaching out to the influential, powerful and the wealthy – Several years ago, Harliem and Vania, working with their amazing support couple, John and Karen Louis, realized that in order to build a nation-changing church in a third world country it was imperative that they reach out to and baptize members of the wealthy and the educated class in their country. They began a ministry devoted to this effort, not because God loves these people more than the poor and uneducated, but because if they were going to have the financial resources in a time that our sister churches are offering relatively little support, this was absolutely necessary.

4. Maintaining a real sense that we are part of a world-wide mission – In the last six years, the Indonesian churches have planted 16 churches. Their prayer is to plant another 20 churches by 2020. Thirteen of their churches are currently self-supported, so the money collected from the U.S. is used for newly planted churches. In the last year alone, three more churches have become self-supported. The Indonesian churches are grateful to the U.S. congregations that have faithfully supported them for many years: Northern Virginia, Potomac Valley, Ohio (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, Dayton) and Delaware.

5. Creating new ministries and missions, as needed, to adapt to various situations and cultures – We should not forget that all this is happening in a country where Christianity is not particularly welcome. Just a few years ago, on the island of Ambon, where we have a church, Muslim fundamentalists went on a rampage, rioting, burning down churches, killing and looting. The “Christians” responded in kind, so not all fault lay with the Muslims who were the initiators. As a result, whole parts of the island are now controlled by radical Muslims and a “Christian-majority” island is no longer a safe place for a Christian. There are many stories like this. Yet, the church has moved forward. The church in Jakarta has grown forty percent in the last six years.

Final thoughts – What the churches in Indonesia are teaching me is that simple faith in our amazing God is the key to building a great church. This faith comes at least in part from a visionary leader or leaders who model this kind of faith for the people. They must fundamentally believe that this is a work of God and they must put before their people a vision for greatness in God’s kingdom.

Dr. John Oakes, evidenceforchristianity.org

Editor’s note: Please visit www.DisciplesToday.net for the entire story, this version was edited for space.

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Indonesia Churches Set Example of Faith

Written by *John Oakes, San Diego, CA*

I want to share with the churches what I have observed in our sister churches in Indonesia.

In the past ten years I have been privileged to travel literally all over the world visiting churches in the ICOC fellowship. I have had the wonderful pleasure of teaching to more than 150 churches in nearly 70 countries. My observation is that everywhere I go I see a few churches “holding their own” spiritually, but the great majority are growing in faith, in zeal for God, in raising up visionary leadership, in the teaching ministry and in reaching out to the needs of our communities.

In my travels, to me, the Indonesia family of churches stand out in some really important ways and I want to share what I have observed with the rest of our fellowship. First let me share a bit about Indonesia. It is a unique country in many ways:

- Fourth largest country in the world, behind China, India and the US.
- Largest Muslim majority country in the world. With a population of a bit over 250 million, it is about 85% Muslim.
- Although it is a predominantly Muslim country, it is relatively open to other religions and has an officially secular government. Christians have had very significant persecution for sure, but despite occasional acts of violence and official resistance to Christian missionaries, it remains one of the most evangelizable of predominantly Muslim countries.

I have now had the amazing pleasure of visiting the church in Jakarta four times in the past eight years, as well as churches in Medan, Denpassar, Surabaya, Manado and Bandung. Everywhere I go I see a spirit in the disciples in Indonesia which is an example to all of our churches. It is hard for me to put my finger on it, but I would like to mention five aspects of what I see.

1. Real and lasting effect on their society as a whole – Our churches in Indonesia see no limit to what God can do through them to impact their people, their society and even their government. I find myself thinking, “Don’t they



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— Tuesday, 25 August 2015

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July 7-10, 2016

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