

IN PARTNERSHIP

March 2020



Lautoka Shows the Light to People in Darkness

Melanie, Lautoka Church, Fiji

Melanie was still studying at university when she found out she was pregnant. Immediately, she was scared. She was not married to her partner, and she didn't know how people would react. She knew there were not very many opportunities for single mothers in Fiji. It was going to be difficult for her.

Pastor David Reddy, from the Lautoka church, tells us her story with great sadness. When she told her partner, and her family, she could not have anticipated their reaction.

"When she became pregnant, the guy who was involved, he don't want it," Pastor Reddy says. "And the parents, they chase her away." He shakes his head, and continues, "She went to a place where she did not know what to do."

Melanie was in the darkness, and could not see the light. Abandoned by her partner and her family, she was forced to move away from her home. She was determined to find a place where she and her child could be safe.

That's when she found Lautoka church, and started going to services there.

"When we met her, we encouraged her," Pastor Reddy said. "She had no hope when she left her family, her school course she was studying..." He pauses, and his voice becomes spirited. "But she is different."

Pastor Reddy and his wife, Christy, took Melanie in. She lived with them, and they became trusted friends, almost like parents to her. They helped her figure out how she would take care of her baby.

With help from others in the church community, David and Christy also helped Melanie financially. They helped her pay for food and other necessities for the baby. She had found more than a church — she had found a family!

"I asked her, what do you think? What do you think about your future? She replied — and this is why I am very encouraged — that God will take care of her. When she accepted Jesus Christ, she gained hope and confidence too. She is growing in the Lord, and is willing to get baptised."

Churches like Lautoka can be a light in the darkness to people who feel like they have no hope. People just

like Melanie, who are abandoned, are looking for a place that will be safe for them. That will encourage them. That will help them grow.

When you support Walk For Hope this year, you are helping churches like Lautoka around the world reach out to people like Melanie. You are providing a light in the darkness, to some of the people who need it the most.

If your church is interested in taking part in Walk for Hope, email us at info@gmp.org.au or contact your State Partnership Coordinator for resources. Contact details for your State Coordinator can be found on our [website](#).

Also in the Issue

News and Events	2
The Struggle to Share the Light in Sulawesi	2
Be The Light	4
Valma Schultz, First Aboriginal Woman on Dundas Shire Council	4

News & Events



Walk For Hope 2020 March 16 – April 12

This Easter, while you reflect on your own spiritual journey with God, Be the Light to others who need Him. With your help, many people around the world will have the opportunity to start a relationship with God and have their own Walk For Hope.

If your church is interested in receiving resources for Walk For Hope, email us at info@gmp.org.au or contact your State Partnership Coordinator. State contact details can be found on our [website](#).



SURRENDER20 Melbourne 19 - 22 March

SURRENDER20 is a conference to inspire Christians to respond to the radical call of Jesus to the margins. It invites you to see God's vision of hope and wellbeing, and to motivate you to work for the healing of others in your local and global communities. Be challenged to take action for the poor and marginalised, as we explore what it looks like to work towards Shalom: the flourishing of all creation.

www.surrender.org.au/conference



Above: Ferius ministers to his community in Sulawesi, Indonesia

The Struggle to Share the Light in Sulawesi

As Christians it is part of our daily walk to share the light of Jesus with others. In some places, like Indonesia, that can be a difficult thing to do.

When Ferius started his mission to the people of Sulawesi, he learned that the majority of the population was Muslim. When greeting them, the first question he was asked was “What religion do you believe?” Answering honestly about his Christian faith was met with a cold response.

But Ferius knew that he had to try and be a light to this community.

Hery Susanto, Dean of the Christian Church Theological School Indonesia (CCTSI), told us about Ferius’ walk in faith, while he was visiting Australia last year.

Growing up in Papua, Ferius’ father was a farmer and his mother was a basket weaver. They never went to college or university, but Ferius always dreamed that he and his siblings would be able to have a higher education.

“Ferius decided to come to CCTSI because he talked to an alumni in Papua about a dream he had,” Hery explained to us.

“He failed to climb the mountain riding his motorbike, and he prayed that God would help him. He found out that when he let go of everything, God lifted him up to the top.”

“Is it a sense of call? Yes. He never went far before, but he felt that God was calling him to go far from his tribe and find something new for his life.”

Despite his passion, Ferius faced a lot of hardships coming to Indonesia. He needed to learn a new language, and struggled to talk with new friends. His wallet was stolen, and his debit card was hacked. He fell behind in his work, because he had never used a computer before.

“He tried to give up in the first year when he reflected on the sad things that happened to him. When he thinks about his family who is far away from him, he felt lonely and almost gave up. He cries and doesn’t know what to do.”

But Ferius stayed strong and in his second year, God changed his heart.

“He came to stay at the hospital, because one of his friends got in an accident. While accompanying his friend, I came to him and started making conversation as a friend.”



Left: Church Congregation in Sulawesi. Top Right: Outside the church. Bottom Right: Ferius graduating from Christian Church Theological School

We shared jokes, life experience, and my dream about becoming a vocational doctor that works in rural places and got paid in bananas,” Hery smiles.

“His eyes shine bright and he says, “That’s my place”. I didn’t know what made him so excited. Since then our relationship is getting closer, and he is willing to be a good student, and keep proving that he is able to reach our dream.”

And this is the path that led Ferius to Sulawesi, where he is now wondering, “How can I be a light to the people in this community?”

Because the majority of the population is Muslim, saying you are a Christian can mean having the door closed in your face. People can be unsure of whether to trust your intentions.

Ferius was not discouraged. He decided the best way to connect with people was to work hard with a genuine heart. So he met with another CCTSI alumni, who grows coffee in Sulawesi, and started working hard, selling coffee in the community.

“Ferius came to work, not just for religion,” Hery says.

“Since then he starts making a connection with people, and more and more people, they love him because he is diligent and works as ‘a good servant’ for them. They didn’t prejudice him anymore.”

Eventually, people started to ask him: What is the Bible like? And who is Jesus?

“He always shares his testimony about how good Jesus is, and how valuable His sacrifice for us is. He keeps telling them that Jesus has changed his life from an introvert and low self-esteem, to a new man who is always positive in life.”

“People around him are mostly thinking about earthly values like how to be rich, how to live happy in having many things. But the opposite, Ferius is showing an example by having a heart of giving, the heart of loving, heart of sacrificing for others. And he explains that Jesus is the one that he tries to follow His pattern.”

One family offered their home to be used as a church, so Ferius could preach and share the gospel with them. It is only small, but that church in Sulawesi is growing.

Ferius has shared the light of Jesus to many, and they go on to share it with their friends and family!

“The light of Jesus has changed their life,” Hery says.

“[They’re] not free from all struggles, but [have] boldness to face struggles and keep faithful and content, grounded in faith. Some had shared a testimony that, since they study the Word of God consistently, they could have self-control and awareness of who they are and what God desires them to do.”

You can take a step in your walk with Jesus, and help people like Ferius be a light to the community around them. Without resources people like Ferius cannot study and be sent to be the light of Christ to communities – some that have never heard the gospel before.

When you give to Walk For Hope, you are giving people like him the ability to go and stay in these communities. When your church comes together and raises an offering, you help small churches, in somebody’s home, stay strong and grow larger.

Please walk together with us, and help share the light to many more people around the world.



Be the Light

I was in Year 12, on a school holiday kayaking trip on the Goulburn River. We became caught in a storm. A gum tree fell and landed on our kayaks, just missing our tents. Our leaders decided that we needed to evacuate. So in the middle of the night we headed out.

It was raining with no moonlight, and the fields were muddy. Our torches struggled to light the way. We really had no idea where we should go. After crossing fences and stumbling along in the mud, we saw a light. It gave us direction and hope. It became a place of grace and shelter. A dozen muddy boys and their leaders were given a place to sleep and dry out.

We experience dark and stormy times, both corporate and personal. People and communities are marginalised. The impact of violence and abuse is real for far too many. So many are directly impacted by disaster, fearful of the pandemic and overwhelmed by climate change. We also struggle through personal crises, failure and family fractures. In the face of darkness we can despair.

Jesus says “I am the light of the world” – and he also says to his disciples (us) “you are the light of the world.”

This gift of light, no matter how small it seems, gives hope, direction and grace in darkness and despair.

This reality is true whether the darkness is physical, emotional or physical.

Jesus connects who he is with who we are to be. We are light due to our deep and personal experience of Jesus bringing light to us. This light of Jesus brings power, healing and grace. Our being the light is a natural next step based on our experience of Jesus.

Being the light is not about behaviour – it is the result of us having our lives lit by the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus.

John Gilmore,
Executive Officer

Valma Schultz, First Aboriginal Woman on Dundas Shire Council

On the 19th of November, Mrs Valma Schultz was sworn in as a Councillor for the Dundas Shire Council. She is the first Aboriginal Ngadju woman and first Norseman Indigenous person elected to the role.

The ceremony was well attended by the community. The mayor of Norseman invited Ps Kevin Tucker from the Norseman Church to provide some Christian input to the ceremony. Ps Kevin read from the scriptures and prayed the opening prayer. This was followed by two Christian songs led by Annette Stocks on guitar.

The Dundas Shire covers the area from Norseman Region to

Balladonia, Caiguna Madura, Mundrabilla to Eucla. Valma is the daughter of the late Phyllis Wicker and wife of James Schultz. James and Valma are long serving members of the Norseman Churches of Christ and are part of the IMA (Indigenous Ministries Australia) team in W.A.

One of James and Valma’s daughters, Cian lives with Remy and Theresa Sese’s daughter, Narelle, in Esperance. Narelle has had the privilege of mentoring and supporting Cian complete her Traineeship in Conservation Agriculture and Land Management (Cert 4. CALM) with Wongutha CAPS. She was nominated for the ‘Fletcher International WA Aboriginal

*Valma Schultz (centre) with three of her children
Photo courtesy of ABC NEWS www.abc.net.au*



Student of the year’ in April 2019. In October, Cian applied for a job with the Esperance Dept of Parks and wildlife and was accepted and is now working with them.

It is wonderful to see the Schultz family continue to be a positive Christian influence within the broader community, from one generation to the next.