

IN PARTNERSHIP

March 2021



L-R: Yulia travels by motorbike and by foot to reach remote communities in Indonesia. Far Right, church gathering, Indonesia.

Yulia loads her motorbike onto a wooden raft as she prepares to cross the Kapuas River. The river cuts across the Sanggau Regency in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, where Yulia ministers to people in remote communities. As she serves people on both sides of the river, she frequently has to cross the more than 500 metres of water with her little dirt bike.

“Our location is very remote from the nearest town,” Yulia tells us. “There is no public transportation except private vehicles. So, we need to drive dirt bikes for four hours along slippery, muddy roads, made worse after it’s rained.”

As Yulia says, the roads in Sanggau are not maintained well. They can be narrow and incredibly slippery. Many sections are unpaved, meaning they become swampy and muddy in the wet. Despite this, Yulia travels these roads on her bike, because she has been called to share the love of Jesus.

“I praise the Lord that the people here have given me opportunity to take part on a committee for a kindergarten where I am able to teach as well.”

“Many times, the trail is very slippery and I’ve fallen in the mud many times! Ha!” Yulia laughs. “When I have some leisure time, I go to three other villages to reach out. I also keep telling the gospel to the people along the road when we walk together, kind of like the Road to Emmaus story.”

The places that Yulia travels to are remote and rural. They lack many things that we in Australia can take for granted.

“There is no internet, no electricity, no toilets. We have to take a bath at what’s called a ‘Topen’ (an open restroom at the edge of the river). It’s because of God’s grace that I can go this far.”

Without her motorbike, Yulia wouldn’t even be able to visit these remote communities. And it’s because of supporters like you that Yulia and other motorbike evangelists have the tools they need!

When you give to Walk for Hope this year, you’re helping people like Yulia spread hope to remote communities. You are giving them the resources they need to persevere despite the difficulties they face.

When she reaches the other side of the river, Yulia still has another three kilometres to walk before she reaches her destination. But in her words, there is nothing but hope!

“What a joy that I can share good news to the people here,” Yulia says. “I feel truly blessed that my life is valuable before God, and I can be a blessing to others here.”

“Please pray for my continued ministry in this challenging place.”

*Bring Hope
in Handship*



Despite many challenges, our global partners still yearn to bring hope – the good news of Jesus – to their people. Walk alongside our partners this Easter by participating in Walk for Hope. Support evangelism, church planting and leadership training across the world when you give to Walk for Hope. Your partnership brings hope to their struggles. Download your free resources, including a Holy Week daily devotion, and learn more at www.walkforhope.com.au. Help share hope this Easter, to reach even the most challenging places.

News & Events

Walk for Hope 2021

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Western Australia Bushfire Appeal

In response to the bushfires on the eastern outskirts of Perth, GMP Extend launched an appeal partnering with Mundaring Church of Christ and other agencies responding to this situation. You can help support and meet the needs of those impacted by the fires. Give to the appeal at www.extend.org.au/australian-bushfires-appeal or FreeCall 1800 467 222.

SURRENDER Mini-Fest, March 13

Join embody at a one-day event to connect with the Creator and the SURRENDER community in Melbourne. Tickets available at www.surrender.org.au



Ngaama Indigenous Art Exhibition, March 14-21

Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) is partnering with Dena Gower and Auntie Nola of Ngaama Ministries in Western Australia. The art exhibition will be open to the general public to view and purchase the artworks displayed. Entry is free. Visit the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church website for the full schedule of events during the week: <https://mounties.org.au/event/indigenous-arts-exhibition>



A Walk of Hope

There is small comment made in Galatians that always makes me smile. Paul contrasts two lists. One in which the “works of the flesh are obvious” and the other concerning “the fruits of the Spirit”. At the end of that list comes the comment that “there is no law against such things.” (Galatians 5:19-23)

What a wonderful understatement! It serves to direct our attention towards “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” It’s such a simple list, but a powerful reminder as to what really undergirds character as we seek to allow the Spirit to work in us as we follow Jesus.

A local church, an organisation, an enterprise and a ministry such as GMP can be described as having ‘character’. Appreciating how our character is shaped and how we all are distinctive in our work, outreach and treatment of people is evidence of the fruit listed by Paul being at work.

We all face uncertainties at the moment. Many of us have challenging decisions that need to be made, personally, and in our churches and organisations – GMP included. We have a grace-filled opportunity to approach this season with the fruit of the Spirit at work.

In Lent we journey with Jesus to the cross and are reminded of the way that Jesus approached this impending crisis. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to, “run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame.” (Hebrews 12:1b-2a) It is striking that this Lenten invitation is to journey with Jesus in our view; to persevere and to anticipate joy (one of the fruits of the Spirit).

We all look ahead and wonder. GMP is looking ahead and exploring what it is that we are now being called towards. Yes, perseverance is needed – to not give up when times are difficult. However, it is not a grim experience of clenched teeth as we endure – it is a journey in which joy is anticipated and in which the fruits of the Spirit are present. Our journey changes, and we cannot give up. As we look to Jesus and as hope grows, our journey and the journeys of our partners change to a ‘Walk of Hope’.

John Gilmore,
Executive Officer

Walk for Hope 2021

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Students at International Christian College of Manila, with John Gilmore (centre, back row)

A Strong Sense of Future

The International Christian College of Manila (ICCM) in the Philippines is a residential college with students attending from isolated areas, rural and urban settings, as well as the Manila region. There are 70 students enrolled, aged 16-22 years. Julia, a fourth-year student said that she enjoys studying at ICCM because of her “friends, my classmates, the bonding moments, the learning. Not only knowledge, but what should we do in our daily lives.”

The college offers a BA Theology with four streams of courses – Ministry, Mission, Music or Education. The most popular is Education, as it gives the graduating student opportunities to work as a teacher. Approximately 1040 Churches of Christ congregations in the Philippines do not have the capacity to pay pastors a full-time wage, so they are always looking for external employment, and teaching fits well with pastoral ministry. The college is accredited by the government which allows students to apply for teaching positions and work for government agencies.

Gina Reyes, Academic Dean, says, “One of the missions of ICCM is to train students to be in the churches.” Joshua is a third-year student at ICCM and travels four to six hours to support a church congregation. “It is quite challenging for me to handle because they didn’t have

a pastor for almost two years, so the members have been stagnant or weak because they don’t have a preacher to support them in their life as a Christian.” Joshua says, “There are so many churches that need help.”

The leadership demonstrated by the ICCM faculty is encouraging. There is a sound governance structure and a strong sense of what is possible in the future. Craig Brown, GMP’s International Church Partnerships Director, shared how the college has navigated COVID. “The college had many – reasonable – expectations of 2020. They thought, for example, that they would continue training young men and women face-to-face to be pastors and teachers. That didn’t happen. ICCM were, of course, disappointed by this and switched to online learning as best they could; this, too, was difficult, as many students were not in locations where they could access the internet.” Despite these unexpected challenges, both the staff and students are showing resilience.

CJ, a student, says of the online study experience, “I push myself to be productive...I enjoy reading and online learning has helped me to improve my skills and comprehension at home.”



“I love this school and I want to make more hours to study here.”

- Andrea

Craig is positive about ICCM’s partnership with GMP: “One of the unexpected benefits from 2020 was the connection that we were able to form remotely with ICCM. We have learned so much about each other.” Rick Garcia, President of ICCM also said, “This school or college is not just an ordinary school, but it is a school for the future leaders of the church. We are grateful that GMP is one of our partners and praying that it is a lifetime partnership.”

There are good stories from students about their experience of ICCM and their dreams for the future. John graduated in 2018 and said, “I’m doing my current ministry. I’m doing good stuff because of the help of ICCM. I am who I am because of them.” He gives thanks to his professors and teachers. Arthur Santiago, Board Chairman of ICCM, says of the future, “We want to dream and dream big, because we want growth for the college.”

To support the work of ICCM, please consider giving to Walk for Hope: www.walkforhope.com.au



Colin Scott with Zimbabwean Partners

The Opportunity of COVID-19

I looked forward to visiting my group of GMP partners each year. It was great to see their situations for myself, to meet the teams, to sense the issues that they were facing and, most of all, to spend the time that building a relationship needs.

I miss it.

Like everyone, GMP has had to stop longing for the way things used to be and start working out how we will continue our work using the communication channels that we have. The internet has become more important than ever – someone commented that we should think of it as a human right! – and certainly upgrading internet connections for our partners is high on our agenda.

COVID-19 has precipitated a lot of workarounds, but it has also created its own opportunities.

Localisation

A little while ago the term 'localisation' came into the development vocabulary. We wondered why at first. It sounded like what we had been doing all along. Localisation is about putting local people in charge of the decisions that affect them. It is about only doing for people the things they really can't do for themselves. Sometimes it feels like stretching people and organisations to their limits!

COVID-19 has redoubled our efforts to work in this way. We have had to find different ways of "visiting" partners and have found ourselves interviewing people over WhatsApp, sending even more emails and having even more online conversations and, in one case, engaging a local NGO to collect information for us. Partners are responding with great resilience; they are much more accustomed to coping when things go wrong than we are!

Global Reset

COVID-19 has thrown everything up in the air. In particular, we have realised that our world is even more connected than we thought. A disease that spreads from person to person can find its way into the most remote parts of our world. The health of those places that we too often put out of our minds can affect our own health. Join the **End COVID for All** campaign (as GMP has) to help promote this idea.

There is some evidence that this realisation of the human connectedness of our world and, along with it, the reminder of the fragility of life, have readied us for change in the **global system**. We are more focused on things that matter: on people, on relationships and on our **ultimate destiny**. We want a new way of living together where the strong and the

wealthy take more care of the weak and the impoverished.

In Australia, COVID-19 has placed development at the heart of our foreign policy – traditional distinctions between domestic and international events no longer hold. When we see that poverty, inequality, and inequity in accessing healthcare growing among our Indo-Pacific neighbours, we now know we must act not just for their sakes but also for our own. These things can cause the deterioration of the rule of law, conflict, the disruption of trade and supply chains, economic decline, and irregular migration – all of which can have a direct effect on **Australia**.

I still miss our friends overseas and we will be back with them as soon as we can because being with them signals our care and connection like nothing else. But for now we look for the things that God is teaching us and the character that God is building in us. We know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope (Rom 5:3-4). And now we know it more, by experience.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director