

STT-HKBP
PematangSiantar, North Sumatra
INDONESIA
Easter Sunday – 20 April 2014

*Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” John 20:16
Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!!*

Dear Friends,

I like all of the Gospel accounts of the resurrection, but I particularly like John’s version of that Easter morning. I imagine Mary was more than just a little distraught at the thought of the body having been taken away. I imagine that there was deep despair, grief and fear in her turning this way and that to try to find the body of her Lord. So that when Jesus calls her by name, her surprise at hearing his voice must have been matched by her relief from her distress as she realizes that the one whom she had learned to trust with her very being now lives. This was indeed good news for her and for us this day as we are known by the Christ who now lives beyond death calling you and me into new life today even in the midst of our deep despair, grief and fears.

The last couple of months have been busy ones here at the seminary. I have preached a couple of times to local congregations. I wish that I could say I effectively preached in Bahasa Indonesia, but that would not be true. I have worked with a colleague, Rev. Wilda Simanjuntak, who has translated my preaching. I preached on Palm Sunday in a small congregation and after that service, she told me that she was going to preach at another small congregation. I happily went along with her as I have been trying to experience as many congregations here in Siantar as I can. When we arrived, she invited me to preach again. week after I preached at the Kampung Kristen church in March, they Sunday school camp over a Sunday and Monday holiday. Wilda and I opening service which included the planting of trees on around the building by all the groups of campers. There were ten groups with 10 group. They had come to spend time together with friends and continue to learn about faith and discipleship with Jesus. The theme together was “That We May be One”. In the background of this see the tents in which they would spend their night sleeping. Fortunately, it did not rain that day as we had been having some very heavy rains in the days prior to this camp.



So I did. One had a 24 hour went for the Sunday school campers in each teachers to for their time picture you can

Two weeks ago, the students had an annual week-long event called Kegiatan Olah Raga dan Seni Mahasiswa (KORSWA). It is classes of the seminary in races of all sorts as well as included traditional dancing opening event. Each couple interestingly are the costumes that they are wearing. From left to right, the couples represent Batak Mandailing; Batak Lake Toba; Java; and Bali cultural dress. As part of the opening service/ceremony there was also a musical competition between these four couples. The couple, second from the left, wearing the Batak Lake Toba costume and representing the class of 2013 (year in which they entered the seminary) won the competition which was judged by faculty members. I had the privilege of judging the choir competition and the quartet competition as well as a competition of Mozaik which is the interpretation of a theme in song and dance with no words. The theme this year was “youth arising”. It was interesting to see how this theme got played out. There were many interpretations with the overcoming of the temptations of money, drugs and excess of all kinds.



On the 10th of April, the
For such events, there are
large and made from fake
success on their 36th
businesses. The day began



seminary celebrated its 36th anniversary.
usually signs such as this one which is very
flowers. This one wishes the seminary
anniversary and it is from a couple of local
with a worship service and included the



speeches from a number of graduates who have been serving the church, from faculty members and from the bishop of the HKI (Huria Kristen Indonesia) which is one of the Lutheran bodies here in North Sumatra. They are supporters of the seminary. As part of the 36th anniversary activities, there will be a series of lectures in honor of four professors of biblical studies who taught at the seminary in the past 36 years who have now died in the faith. I will give one of the lectures on the use of scripture in pastoral

care. A couple of widows were able to join us for the day's activities.

Not many of the congregations have a Maundy Thursday service, but Good Friday includes two services. The one in the morning is a regular worship service, much like you might have on a Sunday morning. The afternoon service, however, is a combination of the readings of Christ's passion and a stations of the cross service where there are 12 readings followed by either a congregational hymn or a choir numbers. It is a liturgy that was created by a former bishop. I was invited by Wilda to go with her to a small congregation where she was the worship leader for the day. The services were all in Batak. Fortunately, Batak, like Bahasa, is a phonetic language and so while I didn't understand any of the words, I could sing the hymns. We did sing "O Sacred Head Now Wounded". At 3:00p.m., we stood for a period of silence as the church bell tolled nine times to remember the hour of Christ's death. When this portion of the service was complete, we then moved into the Holy Communion service. The HKBP has traditionally celebrated communion at Easter and Christmas. There is conversation going on about liturgical renewal and change of practice, but it will take some time to change traditions.

There is no tradition of a
Kristen congregation had a youth
walk to Golgotha and crucifixion.
me to go along. I was glad to
was plenty of singing by the
numbers and music provided by



Holy Saturday Easter Vigil, but the Kampung
service which included a pageant of Christ's
Wilda preached at that service and invited
attend. Again, it was all in Batak, but there
congregation as well as special choir
the music school students. At the end of the

service we sang, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today". So Easter had begun! I went to the Bahasa Easter service at the local congregation on Easter morning which is known as "Paskah I" since there was also a service today (Easter Monday) known as "Paskah II" which included the baptism of four children.

Students have begun returning to campus. Tomorrow classes begin again. Please pray for the seminary as it finishes off this year and for students as they complete papers and projects. April 9th was national election day and now there is a process of forming coalitions as a new president will be elected this summer. Pray for a peaceful process and a peaceful transition. Volcanoes and heavy rains also have many people concerned. Mount Merapi, located in central Java, spewed ash rain two days ago. There are still 24,000 people in refugee camps as a result of Mount Sinabung's eruption in August who long to return home and to their farms. Pray for them as well. I continue to remember you all in my prayers and give thanks for your partnership in this ministry. Thank you.

In the Risen Christ,

Rosanne