

Dear Brothers and sisters at Harvest Baptist,

In recent years our status here in Indonesia has changed from “minister” to “spiritual counselor”. This basically means we are no longer able to sign official letters or to marry anyone. Since we now have ordained ministers in the church here, this change has actually made things easier for me. As Paul said, I didn’t come here to baptize (or to marry people). The title we have now really does describe much of what we do. We have been translating the Bible, making lessons and training them to teach and minister. In the past few years, most of the teaching in the church and out of it has been done by the folks here. I do really love to teach the Bible, so I manage to do that. We have also had numerous opportunities to give counseling to the church. When a former elder candidate from our church wasn’t ordained, he brought a second church into our very small village. When we were asked by our folks what they should do, I just said to be kind to the people who have left. I think for the most part they have done this. Now we are seeing some of the folks who have left coming back again.

The Sekadau Bible is still in the process of being printed. We are using a printer here in Indonesia. When our Bible was sent to them to be printed, they wrote back and said they wouldn’t be able to begin printing until early January. I thought this wouldn’t be problem since our dedication service had been scheduled for April. In January I wrote to them to ask when they might be starting the printing of the Bible. They wrote back that they do not have the paper they need to print the Bibles. (Welcome to life in Indonesia) They said they have ordered the paper but that it would be 6-8 weeks until it arrives. They said that was only an estimate. Rarely have I seen anything here done faster than the estimated time. It seemed we might actually have a Bible dedication without any Bibles. The printer is still saying there is no problem and that they will get it all done in time. I am skeptical. With this in mind, we very reluctantly have put off the Bible dedication until May 10<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully that will give the printer time to finish the Bibles and have them shipped here. In a worst case scenario we will have the dedication without the Bibles. Bella and I have been planning our home assignment for right after the Bible dedication, so we have had to put that off twice so far. If the Bibles are not done, we will still have the dedication and then go on home assignment. Whenever the Bibles actually arrive, we will come back and distribute them. Of course our first choice is have the Bibles here before May 10<sup>th</sup>.

I thought some time ago that I wanted to introduce some of the people here that minister in the church and in the areas beyond us. What that in mind I want to start with Inont. He is one of the key folks involved in ministry. He is originally from our village, but he left 30 years ago to marry a woman from a neighboring tribe. The woman he married claimed to be a believer, but her life really hasn’t reflected that. His wife had an affair and forced a divorce. Inont gave her all their possessions and property and came back here to Parobut with nothing. It hasn’t been an easy journey for him. When he first came back here, he was pretty spiritually immature and truthfully not real pleasant to be around. But we have watched as he has matured in the Lord. No one here has had more of a hunger to study the Word. He is working with Bella these days to help revise lessons. It is pretty normal for me to get called in to where they are working to answer some Biblical question. He has decided to remain single, which is not at all normal for here. He is the most faithful man we have to teach and disciple. Each week he goes to two different village to teach the young believers there. He does this even when on one will go with him. He also has been going to other areas once a month to teach the believers there. All of this is difficult for him. He doesn’t drive a motorcycle, so he has to walk for hours to get to these various places. He also is extremely poor and barely manages to have food to eat. When I have meetings with the men, Bella generally makes a snack. I never have to worry about leftovers. Inont takes anything that is left, and I am very happy for him to do that. Because he is divorced, our church group here will not allow him to be ordained. But in every way possible he is an elder without title here in the church. When we think of what a pain he was when he first arrived back here, it is amazing to see where he is today. Please do be praying for him. It can be very discouraging for him when no one is willing to travel with him to some of the villages he goes to. And please pray that he will continue to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Bella and I continue to work trying to get everything ready for when we leave. Right now she is in the next room recording all the songs from the church song book. All of the songs are in the Sekadau language. Not everyone knows the tunes to all the songs. Hopefully this will help preserve the songs. Some of them I wrote, and some of them were written by the folks from the church. I am spending most of my time revising lessons to leave with the folks here. It has become evident that I am not going to be able to finish this before we leave. I hope to have the 50 lessons in Acts done next week, and then I plan to start on Romans. Bella is working with Inont on the 1 Corinthians lessons. I think she is almost done with those. Please do pray that we will be able to get a large part of these lessons revised and put in books before we leave. We do plan to keep working on them during home assignment.

Thanks so much for your prayers for us and for the Sekadau people. This is truly the Lord’s work. We are privileged to be here and have a part in what God is doing. Thank you very much for the \$100 that you sent to us in December and for the \$23,000 that you sent for the translation.

Yours in Christ,

Paul and Bella

Prayer requests.

1. That the Bibles will be done in time for the dedication
2. For Inont as he serves the Lord
3. For Bella and I to be able to make good progress in revising lessons
4. That the Parobut church will walk together in unity and love.

The two pictures are of Inont helping revise 1 Corinthians lessons and Palau working at recording the Sekadau songs. Palau has a beautiful singing voice.

