

April 11, 2024

Dear Brothers and sisters at Harvest Baptist,

The time for the Sekadau Bible dedication is drawing near. The Bibles have been printed and should come in when Bella and I go out to meet some of the guests who are coming. We haven't seen them yet, but I am sure they are nice.

One of our deep concerns was how to make the dedication ceremony honoring to God with all the secular speakers that we really have to give time to. With this kind of event, we have to invite government officials from our area. That includes, the village head, the "county mayor", our congressional representative, the local head of the department of religion (protestant division), the provincial head of the department of religion, and our local and national board members. Most of these men are not believers. We attended a Bible dedication a few years back. The "county major" of that area was given 10 minutes to speak, and he took about 45. His entire speech was in praise to himself. There was really no culturally appropriate way to get him to stop talking. This kind of thing is what concerned us. After getting some advice from another missionary who has been through this, we have decided to have two dedication meetings. The first will be a ceremony for our church on Thursday night, May 9<sup>th</sup>. During that meeting, we will give the Bibles to most of our folks and have a time centered around praise to our Lord. The next day, on Friday, we plan to have the "official" dedication with all of the speakers and formality.

During this dedication time we will have visitors from Germany, the U.S. and Indonesia. Many of our former co-workers plan to be here to celebrate with us. Bella has been busy getting things ready for them. We personally plan to host 13 of them. The others will be staying with our tribal folks. The believers here are very excited about all of this and are all planning to pitch in and do all the work that needs to be done for both the dedication itself and also for the big meal afterward. Bella and I are really looking forward to our guests, but we will be glad when it is all over.

After the dedication, Bella and I plan to go on home assignment. Our original plan was to not return here. But we realize that there is still a great deal of work that we want to do here before we leave. We need to revise all the lessons that I have made for the teachers in here. We also need to teach some of them the rudiments of computer use. Our church is located in a very rural setting. Many of our folks have had very limited schooling. Some have never gone to school. So, it is more of a challenge to teach them how to use a computer and how to make a lesson. We plan to return here next January and stay as long as we need to in order to finish things up. Since we are returning here, that has taken all the pressure off of us getting rid of all of our things. We have been here for 20 years now, and we have accumulated a lot of junk. The trick for us is to be able to dispose of it without causing problems among the folks. Now we won't have to do that until we return next year. Our fervent hope is that the Lord will return before that and we won't need to do it at all.

Since I am planning on including a picture of the Bible that the printer sent us, I feel like I need to include an explanation. Our Bible is called "Omóng Allah". This means "the Word of God". In the past we have had some questions about why we used the name "Allah" for God. For most of us from America, we only think of this in terms of Islam. But this is the word that the Indonesian Christians use for God. Years ago, all the missionaries from our region met together and talked about what we all were going to use for the name of "God". Many of us, including me, were very averse to using "Allah". But for the Christians here, this word does not have all the Islamic connotations that it does for us in the West. We felt it was best to use the name that the rest of the churches in this country were using for God. That way when they gathered together with Christians from other areas, there would be no confusion. One of the names we considered using when we first started was the name of one of the main spirits. We felt we could just re-teach them about who this was. But it turns out that other more established churches use this name for the Devil. You might be able to imagine the confusion if the name one church is using for God, another church is using for the devil. So, for Elohim, we use "Allah", for Adonai, we use "Tuhan", which means Lord, and for Yahweh we use Yaweh, which means "I AM".

Thank you for your prayers for us and for the people here. For those of you who have been praying for the two couples involved in adultery, one of the couples is doing very well. We are meeting with them each week to study the Word. They write the verses down and then go home and look at them again for themselves. It has been hard, but they are really doing well. The second couple is the man who sinned and his wife. His wife just doesn't seem to be able to forgive him. They have not come to church since his confession, and we rarely see them at all. Please do keep praying for both of these couples.

Thank you very much for the \$100 that you sent to us in March. We hope to see many of you when we are on home assignment.

In Christ,

Paul and Bella

Please pray;

1. That the Bible dedication will be honoring to God and an encouragement to the believers here.
2. That Bella and I will be do what we need to before we leave in May.
3. That the church would be wise to the tactics of the devil and that they will be united in heart and purpose

This is a picture that the printer sent to us of one of the Sekadau Bibles.

