

## INDONESIA – Java Island Outreach

Indonesia has the world's 4th largest population. It is made up of 1300 different ethnicities in 17,000 islands stretching over 3000 miles along the equator north of Australia. Official figures say that 87% of the more than 275 million confess Islam. The vast majority, however, are nominal Muslims and know very little about their religion. The claim of 11% confessing Christians seems inaccurate in the light of the steady growth of the Indonesian church.

Bahasa Indonesian is the national language, but 737 other languages are spoken. Traditional folkways are strong among all. Indonesia has many young families, over 40% of the population are under 25 years of age. Over 60% live in urban areas.

Half the Indonesians live on Java Island. Javanese language dominates, the sec-



Sunday school teacher training at Gunungkidul-Yogyakarta

ond language is Sundanese. The Indonesian capital, Jakarta, is the 2nd largest urban area in the world. Two of the three MERF ministry teams serve on Java Island, one in Jakarta and the other is in Malang (central East Java). The original team serves from Makassar, Sulawesi Island.

Both Java teams have active Bible outreach and training programmes both in-person and online. The Jakarta team also shares the gospel via broadcasts in Javanese and Sundanese languages as well as Bahasa Indonesian.

### Online Biblical Training

In God's providence, despite the frustrating disruption and challenges, months of extended

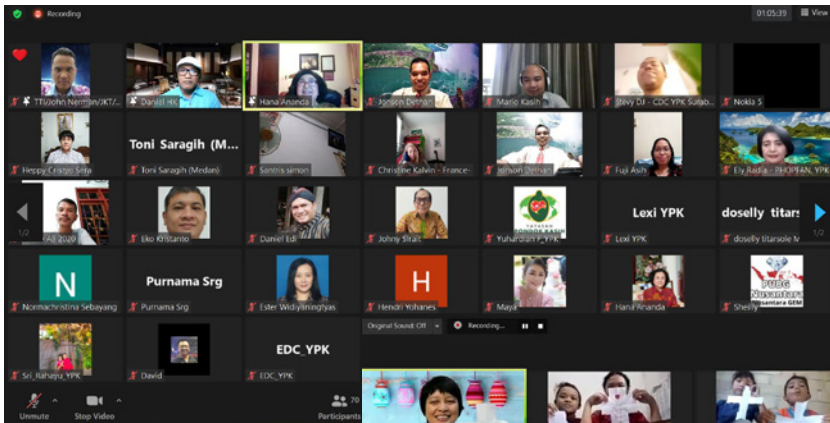
COVID measures hindering Bible teaching face-to-face actually resulted in expansion of online activities beyond anything imagined. Before COVID, most activities were in the immediate vicinity with occasional long ministry trips to far areas. Trips provide encouragement to small fellowships and the training of local spiritual leaders. COVID lockdowns and the rise of internet apps, especially ZOOM meetings, enabled online outreach and biblical training opportunities to greatly multiply overnight. Existing online programmes blossomed and new ones were added, targeting a variety of different audiences. Suddenly requests came in from far and wide to join the online biblical training events.

No longer were classroom space, distance or accommodation an issue. Indonesian believers are hungry for God's Word. Even during the COVID restrictions, from the security of their own homes, located miles and miles away, believers and serious seekers have been able to connect. They could receive Bible teaching, ask questions, share and pray together. Previously, it would have been difficult and expensive, if not impossible, for many of the participants to have such opportunities. Finally, now in-person activities are starting up again as the online programmes also continue to expand. Praise God!

In **Malang**, Pastor Jonson Dethan's regular livestream

*"For God alone  
my soul waits  
in silence; from  
him comes my  
salvation. He  
alone is my rock  
and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall  
not be greatly  
shaken."*

— Psalm 62:1-2



**Above:** Pastor Jonson Dethan teaching online. **Right:** Online Sunday school Easter celebration

Bible teaching become YouTube videos, available at any time. Over 1700 are subscribed to the channel, they come from a variety of religious backgrounds and places. Some ask questions or make comments.

In **Jakarta**, Tommy & Elisa Christanto prepare short radio and online audio and video Bible programmes in both Bahasa Indonesian and Javanese languages. These are done in a variety of formats. This includes, devotionals, Bible stories with songs & simple related handicrafts, as well as Bible knowledge activities & quizzes. Some are shared on YouTube and others by WhatsApp. Many are designed especially for children. Others target teenagers

and some are for adults. Pastors and Sunday school teachers express appreciation for these online resources to share the gospel and nurture their churches. These have been especially valuable during the extended pandemic restrictions. A regular online Sunday school class for children and prayer meetings continue online. Also, online Sunday school teacher training courses meet a big demand, with participants from all over

Indonesia and beyond.

In addition, Sundanese and Sumba speakers serve part-time on the team. A weekly

ecchism YouTube series – *The Minister's Cat* is being translating to Indonesian. Also, this year at the request of Christian radio stations in Indonesia, MERF's Arabic team provided recordings sung from the Arabic Psalter to air during the Muslim Ramadan fast. Interest in the Arabic language has provided an opportunity to share beautiful Psalms along with translation to Indonesian.

## In-person Outreach

Bible radio programme is aired in the Sundanese language. Another is about to be launched in the Sumba language.

## Joint Projects

It is especially encouraging to see other MERF ministries combining efforts with the Indonesian team to share the gospel. Currently the MERF Augustine Programme Coordinator's 7-minute simplified cat-

As the pandemic subsides, in-person Vacation Bible School events, along with children's ministry training, distribution of Christian literature and small diocesan aid projects among the poor are increasing. Some new on-line contacts can now be followed up in person. Prayer is needed for wisdom to balance online and in-person gospel ministry. These ministries bring God's transforming Word to many Indonesians.

### MERF-England & Wales

25 Church St., Willington, Eastbourne, BN20 9HR [www.give.net/MERF](http://www.give.net/MERF)

### MERF-Ireland

(charity no. 103181) 246 Vow Road, Rasharkin, Ballymena BT44 8TB [www.give.net/20221778](http://www.give.net/20221778)

### MERF-Scotland

1 MacAdam Way, Dalmellington, East Ayrshire KA6 7FD Scotland UK [www.give.net/20035868](http://www.give.net/20035868)

### International Evangelical Church

Sundays 10:30 am & 6:00 pm – John Calvin Centre  
57 Stylianou Lena St., Larnaca, Cyprus



Tommy & Elisa Christanto visit gospel radio listener community in Central Java mountains