

Timor Leste

3 February 2024

Timor Leste (East Timor to Australians) was always going to be a challenging area in which to preach the true Gospel. Controlled by Portugal as a colony for 500 years, governed by Indonesia for 25 years, and granted self-governing rights after a referendum in 1999, Timor Leste was a troubled country by the time fieldworkers arrived in September 2004. Burnt out public buildings, shops and private houses were the norm rather than the exception. To survive in Timor Leste, the average Timor person needed to have at least a working knowledge of one of the local dialects as well as Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia. Few spoke English although many wanted to learn it. That led us into teaching English in several universities. Our first contacts and subsequent baptisms came from that source.

Now, however, the Dili Ecclesial activity centres on the home of Bro Jordan and Sis Linda Harries. They hold Sunday School, Memorial Meetings, Bible studies, and provide accommodation for relatives and brothers or sisters who come in from the districts to the Memorial Meeting. Over the last four or five years, the ecclesia has grown steadily. Sis Linda, born in Timor, has been very active in sharing the Truth with her siblings, her relatives, and friends. A number of these have been baptized and have become active members of the ecclesia.



Sunday School Class

Sisters Linda and Vina (a friend of Sis Linda who has embraced the Truth) conduct a Sunday School in Dili, and Sis Agosthina runs a Sunday School in her house at Liquica, about 30km west of Dili.

From time to time, the ecclesia organizes outings to help with bonding between members and to widen their contact with other like-minded people. In late June, a number of brothers and sisters were able to join in the ACBM Solo Bible Week in Indonesia. It was a welcome opportunity to be able to learn more of God's ways in their own language and develop friendships with those of a neighbouring country.

A Bible School was not scheduled by the Area Team for late 2023, however, members of the ecclesia asked, "Why can't we organize one of our own?" So this request was heartily supported because it has always been our aim to encourage initiative and self-reliance among members of the ecclesia. It was decided to organize accommodation for two or three days and a boat trip to Atauro Island, a few kilometres north of Dili. These activities were a great success.

In October 2023, Bro Shem and Sis Laura Richards and children, as well as Shem's brother Jordan, visited Dili. They found it rather quiet as several of the brothers known from earlier visits were in Australia on fruit picking visas, and others at work or in the districts. While they were there, however, they witnessed a very important occasion in the progress of the Dili Ecclesia. Finally, after two or three years and \$5,000, the ecclesia has now become registered. This allows the ecclesia to hire venues, buy property and deal with the government where necessary. There are many more events and activities planned for 2024, God willing.

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After the Dili Memorial Meeting