

East Timor



East Timor is a country on the eastern half of the island of Timor, with Indonesia's West Timor to its west and Australia to its south across the Timor Sea. East Timor was a Portuguese colony for 400 years. In November 1975, the territory gained independence from the Portuguese regime. Then early that December Indonesian forces occupied the area, and East Timor became one of its provinces. In 1999, an independence referendum was held and passed, but those who opposed its independence fueled a civil war, which came to an end after a multi-national peacekeeping force intervened. East Timor finally gained its independence in 2002. (Reference: <https://www.britannica.com/place/East-Timor#ref326338>)

East Timor has a population of approximately 1.32 million. Among them, the indigenous people (Papua and Malay or Polynesian mixed race) account for 78%; Indonesians account for 20%; and the remaining 2% are Chinese. Its capital, Dili, is a major city with a population of approximately 280,000, and 80% of the country's economic activities take place here. The official languages are Portuguese and Tetum (many of its vocabularies derive from Portuguese). Yet Indonesian and English are considered the working languages. East Timor's economy is still recovering from many years of war. It is one of the least developed countries in the world, with a huge economic inequality. While 60% of its people are engaged in agricultural production, the country is not self-sufficient and depends heavily on foreign aid for food sustenance. More than 90% of the government revenue comes from offshore oil and natural gas mining.

The traditional belief is animism, holding that all natural things have spirits and can influence human events. During the period of Indonesian rule, the constitutional monotheism required people to choose one from among the six official religions recognized by the government. Many turned to Christianity and the number of Christians swelled rapidly. Before Indonesia's occupation, only 20% of the population were Roman Catholics. Today, more than 90% are, making it one of the most densely Catholic countries in the world.

Protestants account for about 2.6%, and Muslims about 1.7%. The Constitution guarantees religious freedom; the government does not interfere with religious affairs. Various religions co-exist on friendly terms, but the Catholic Church has strong influence and control over its believers.

As early as 1997, a sister from Surabaya, Indonesia came to the capital Dili to do business and started a group meeting in her house. In 1999, all the saints returned to Indonesia to escape the civil war after the independence referendum got passed. Later on, another sister came back to Dili. At the beginning of 2013, the brothers in Surabaya received the burden from the Lord to visit Dili. They came across a local brother who recently returned from Taipei to Dili. This local brother got saved in Taipei in the 1980s and had his church life there. He had a strong burden to start the church life in Dili and even prepared a room for the meetings. They also met a seeker meeting in a denomination, a contact of one of the saints, and had a very good fellowship with him. To their delight, he decided to regularly meet with them. Shortly after that, the saints began to have the Lord's Day meeting and a weekday meeting in the homes, with about a dozen people attending. The saints in Surabaya took turns to come and shepherd the saints in Dili up to June 2015.

Due to the unique historical background of East Timor, the saints belong to different language groups and the need for translation is tremendous at meeting and blending times. In order to cope with the different needs, two simultaneous meetings are always conducted in two different languages. More than twenty saints are attending the meetings regularly. Although the saints are very busy with work, they still long to meet. One of the prayer meetings on Tuesdays is held online starting around 9 to 10pm. During the week, the saints pursue the Holy Word for Morning Revival in various languages. On Lord's Days, they come together to supply one another. But there is no bread-breaking meeting yet in Dili. The local brothers are very burdened for the establishment of the church. A brother has already

prepared a piece of land on which to build a meeting hall.

In November last year, two overseas brothers came to visit and had a good time of blending with the saints. With their help, the brothers of different languages began to gather more to pray, fellowship, and enjoy the Lord for blending and building up, with the view to establish a core service group in preparation for the establishment of the church. In one of the blending meetings, two gospel friends came and joined. They were deeply touched and after the meeting expressed their willingness to be baptized. On the following day, under the witnessing and blessing of the saints, these two got baptized in the ocean to become children of God. At present, both



are in the church life under the saints' shepherding.

The people here are quite open to the gospel and to foreigners. Over the past three years, many foreigners came for investment, and a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses missionaries also came with Bibles and literatures in Tetun. The locals responded enthusiastically and a number of Jehovah's Witnesses "kingdom halls" have since been erected. Seeing this, the saints in Dili are quite burdened to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and teach the proper truth. They also yearn for fellowship of the Body of Christ and warmly welcome the brothers and sisters to visit them and to take part in the gospel propagations to establish and expand the testimony of Jesus in Dili.

Prayer burdens

1. Pray for the establishment of a core service group and the raising up of the church in Dili.
2. Pray for the saints of different languages to come together to pray, fellowship, and enjoy the Lord more for blending and building up.

Pakistan

In response to the spread of the Coronavirus, the government initiated a nationwide lockdown in April. Before the order took effect, the brothers and sisters looked after each other by sending basic necessities (oil, rice, flour, and facemasks) to the more needy homes. During the lockdown, by the saints daily getting on the internet to pursue the word, pray and fellowship together more than once a day, the Lord knitted us together tightly. Many dormant saints got recovered through this practice; some of them took the initiative to contact the saints for prayer. We are in awe of the Lord. The number of attendees in different online meetings (Lord's Day meetings, home meetings, and prayer meetings) not only did not decrease, but has in fact increased. The brothers and sisters are burning in spirit. May the Lord continue to move in His churches and strengthen His testimony in every locality. Please pray for the saints to rise up to pursue the Lord, to pray the kingdom prayers in cooperation with the Lord, and to enter into the current burden of the Lord's Recovery.

Sri Lanka

Because of the pandemic, the government announced school suspensions starting on March 22. A Twenty-four-hour curfew was instituted and all religious gatherings were banned. In response to this, the brothers decided on the following changes after much fellowship:

1. Conduct the existing responsible brothers' fellowship, trainings, and all the church meetings, such as Lord's Day and small group meetings, online in small groups of 4-8 as well as strengthen the online corporate morning revival. It turned out the number of saints attending the Lord's Day meetings increased instead of decreasing.

2. Train the responsible brothers to care for each household individually via social media platforms and to lead online small group meetings by teaching the truth. We proposed getting into the 96 lessons from "A Pattern of the Healthy Words", four weeks per lesson. So far, we have finished 4 lessons and are on Lesson 5. We hope to perfect the brothers to take 5 to 10 minutes each time to teach one

outline point with one or two Bible verses. We estimate that it will take five years to complete the 96 lessons.

3. We also contact the seeking ones and open homes via different social medias in order to reach our goal of 50 churches in Sri Lanka in 5 years. Many new homes are open to us in many places. We truly feel that through the environment the Lord is forcing us to thoroughly practice the God-ordained way. Only by taking this way can the church stand and its testimony spread at such time.

Prayer burdens

1. Pray for the continuation of online meetings that all the saints would be encouraged.
2. Pray for the saints to form small prayer groups to pray for the churches, the saints and the world situation according to the fellowship of the Body of Christ.