

Learning from each other in Global Partnership

(Albert Purba)

The experience of interacting with Christian brothers and sisters in a partnership is a valuable opportunity for me. I am enriched with a variety of perspectives and ways of understanding the gospel message and how it applied practically in everyday life.

I come from a church with a theological and spiritual heritage of the pietist era, and now I am dealing with an living in a post-Christian society. The Christianity that was once brought and introduced by missionaries from this country to our nation, now seems as if it is in a difficult phase. I sometimes get stunned and ask myself, is not my presence in this country like adding a handful of salt to the ocean?

But on the other hand, I see in the pastors and members of the congregation there is a sincere spirit to worship, there is a spirit to share the joy of the gospel, there is a spirit to share the love of Christ with fellow believers in distant lands. All of this has awakened and jolted my awareness that the congregation here still has a fighting spirit to become evangelists. The fire of faith and the Jesus Good New has not been quenched, eventhough it is struggling to be keep flaming and burning.

Even, I see the church here has the same point of contact with the missionaries of previous centuries. That point is proclaiming the good news to the nations. The church here no longer needs to send a large numbers of missionary to mission areas, because people from different countries and nationalities come to meet them in the form of refugees and those who by certain circumstances have to migrate from their homeland.

The way the church here reaches the marginalized is for me a lesson and a true mission act. Because the mission is not a Christianization effort either by providing material assistance or the threat of weapons. No. In our todays situation we can say that mission is a warm hug for those who experience exile and alienation, the mission is an effort to open a comfortable residence for those who are fleeing from life-threatening wars.

Mission is not just preaching Christ, but how to present the face of Christ in oneself to people who are at a critical point their lives. For me, this is the message of what Paul wrote that, "no longer I live, but Christ lives in me."

At the same time, through my sermons and writings to the congregation, I am always telling interesting stories about Christianity in my country. About the spirit to worship God in a

assembly and the full church, about the persistence in facing threats and prohibitions of worship from fundamentalist groups who do not want to see the development of the church and also I always talk about how Christianity dealing with diversity of religions and languages.

In other words, I understand my presence in this country as a missionary service. In addition to learning from them, I also teach them about how different churches in different nations understand and apply gospel truths. Slowly there was a new awareness in me that the church in Germany had indeed experienced a decrease in the number of members but in terms of quality of faith, love and hope did not recede and even kept burning.

Finally, my encounter with brothers and sisters in the global ecumenical encounter had opened my understanding that the gospel is not just a round stone but a diamond that has many sides and angles that when exposed to the light of Gods love reflects its uniqueness.