

# West Papua Mission

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## THEDD JONES WINDEWANI

Thedd Jones Windewani, B.A. in theology (Universitas Klabat Indonesia), M.Min. (AIIAS), is currently the president of West Papua Mission. He is married to Anny S. Sumajouw and they have two daughters.

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West Papua Mission was formerly part of Papua Mission organized in 2013. It is located on the western tip of Papua Island whose capital city is Manokwari. It is under East Indonesia Union Conference. It comprises 12 regencies and 1 municipality such as Sorong, Fakfak, Kaimana, Teluk, Bintuni, Sorong Selatan, Raja Ampat, Manokwari, Manokwari Selatan, Teluk, Wondama, Tambrau, Maybrat, and the city of Sorong.

[Statistics](#) (June 30, 2019): Churches, 43; membership, 9,348; population, 1,335,932.<sup>1</sup> As of 2019, West Papua Mission has a total number of 31 pastors; 11 ordained ministers and 18 non-ordained ministers, and 28 missionary credentials.<sup>2</sup>

## Origin of the Adventist Work in the Territory of West Papua

West Papua's first sustained contact with Seventh-day Adventists came in 1941, when two Indonesian Literature evangelists by the name of Arsad Kadir and Isak Tuamulia entered the New Guinea, now Papua, Indonesia, by selling books in Sorong, Kaimana, Merauke, Dobo and in other areas<sup>3</sup>

Their work reported one convert – a Chinese named Tan. However the work ceased due to Japanese entry to Indonesia.

At the Indonesia Union Executive Committee meeting held early in 1948, consideration was given to opening up mission work in the Dutch part of New Guinea. This decision was made sending two volunteer families of D. A. Dompas and D. Van Waardenburg.<sup>4</sup> Pastor Dompas arrived safely in Sorong on November 8, 1948 and was warmly welcomed by some Seventh-day Adventists members who had come from various sections of Indonesia to work for the oil company. Based in Sorong, were the headquarters of the Netherlands New Guinea Oil Company, with Indonesians as well as Papuans contract labor.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, D. Van Waardenberg and family were set at Manokwari, the prewar capital of Dutch New Guinea. They reached Manokwari three weeks by boat after leaving Batavia, now called Jakarta. The family first settled in the coastal village by tent<sup>6</sup> then moved to the mountain districts due to the great influence of the teachers to the coastal inhabitants from the other denominational mission group that started since 1852.<sup>7</sup>

However, God had blessed the sowing of the gospel seeds in the new territory, Dutch New Guinea. Two years later, during the Indonesia Union annual meeting in 1950, the West New Guinea Mission was formed. Pastor E.

H. Vijsma was appointed as its first president and secretary-treasurer.<sup>8</sup>

Ways were opened for the three angels message to be proclaimed in this wide-range area with three gospel workers. Pastor D. A. Dompas being in Sorong, D. Van Waardenberg in Manokwari and Pastor E. H. Vijsma in Hollandia now called Jayapura.<sup>9</sup>

Pastor Vijsma had secured a land in Berg en Dal (Argapura), Hollandia<sup>10</sup> on which to build the mission home and a mission office and later the first church in Jayapura where the construction materials had all been shipped from Singapore.

A directory of present members as reported by C. P. Sorensen, Far Eastern Division secretary, indicated 80 members, more or less evenly divided into four groups.

Among these were 15 Papuans baptized by Pastor Dompas at Sorong.<sup>11</sup>

Twelve baptized Dutch members in Manokwari and there were several interested families including the mountain tribes in Manokwari.<sup>12</sup>

Though there was no worker yet in Sarmi by that time, there were 17 members and about 15 members in Jayapura and in Serui on the island of Jappen, about 24 families requested for a worker to teach them the way to Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

God's work was steadily advancing for the way has already been opened. Newly baptized members shared their new found faith to their family and friends back in their villages.

Soon the first church was established in Remu Sorong and Brawijaya Church in Manokwari.<sup>14</sup>

With the vast increase of members and churches, considerations of opening schools were planned and request for gospel workers were demanded.

In training school was opened in Jayapura with the vision of training local Papuans to serve as missionaries to the different unreached tribes and villages in Papua. After six months of intense study, six local papuans graduated from the course. These native graduates started the national gospel workers force in Papua Mission.

<sup>15</sup> They were then sent to Arfak Manokwari, Ransik<sup>16</sup> and Waropen.<sup>17</sup>

With the influence of the Holy Spirit, year by year church members were added. Light was shining to different corners of Papua where committed church members and missionaries were present. An inspiration to start a school ignited their spirit inspite of the limited resources. Gospel workers and volunteers accepted the call to expand God's kingdom in this part of the world. Newly graduated students from our Adventists schools carried our Saviour's light and passed them on to their families and village friends. God, the Sower, had blessed the gospel seeds sown in this fertile Papua land. Thus, 60 years later church leaders saw a need to create a new mission.

## Organizational History of the West Papua Mission

West Papua Mission was organized in 2013. During the union year end meeting in 2011, East Indonesia Union Conference (EIUC) made a recommendation to the Southern Asia Pacific Division (SSD) Committee to approve the establishment of a new mission in West Papua province, the West Papua Mission. SSD then approved the recommendation for the establishment of this new mission on December 12, 2012.<sup>18</sup>

The leadership of the Southern-Asia Pacific Division had approved its organization for it has seen its spiritual and financial standing and its potential evangelistic strategy to accomplish the Seventh-day Adventist gospel commission in the area comprising Sorong, Fakfak, Kaimana, Teluk, Bintuni, Sorong Selatan, Raja Ampat, Manokwari, Manokwari Selatan, Teluk, Wondama, Tambrau, and Maybrat. An inauguration ceremony was held in Sorong, the headquarters of West Papua Mission, on December 12, 2012 led by Pastor Alberto Gulfan Jr. Thedd Jones Windewani serves as the first president up to the present, 2020. Executive secretary, Willis Suebu (2013-2015); Treasurer, Jimmy Poluan (2013-2016).

## Other Institutions

Manokwari SDA Elementary School established in 1963, Sorong SDA Elementary School established in 1971, Sorong Junior High School established in 1974, Manokwari Junior High School established in 1986, Manokwari Senior High School established in 1988, Sorong Senior High School established in 1991, Sawandarek SDA Elementary School established in 2003, Sausapor SDA Elementary School established in 2012 and Sausapor Junior High School established 2014.

## Mission Challenges and Vision

Evangelization through Total Member Involvement is still continued to be encouraged among each church member so they will be committed to fully participate. Another challenge for evangelism is the influence of Indonesian's major religion that is common in West Papua too. The claim of territory among other Christian denominations who first established their church in certain places especially in mountain regions and interior parts of Papua. The strong traditional beliefs and customs that some of the church members still hold compromising their faith.<sup>19</sup>

West Papua envisions the use of the (TMI) Total Member Involvement in reaching people with our Gospel through Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle approach individually or by small group Care ministry.

## Current Administration (2017-2020)

President : Thedd Jones Windewani

Executive Secretary : Tonny Mayai

Treasurer : Chandra Ganna

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## NOTES

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8. Sorensen, 1.
9. Ibid., 2.
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19. T. Mayai (West Papua Mission Executive Secretary), interview by the author, April 3, 2020.

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