



Pieterz and Atma Lionora. Credit: *Warta Gereja Advent*, 1954.

Pieterz, P. (1869–1944)

FERIN KRISMINANTO

Ferin Krisminanto, M.P.H., M.Div., is a Ph.D. student in Historical-Theological Studies at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS). He earned a Bachelor of Theology from Indonesia Adventist University (UNAI) in 2012. Prior to coming to AIAS, he served as a church planter at Indonesian Fellowship Manila.

P. Pieterz was one of the first pioneers in Batavia, now Jakarta. Although he relied on a prosthetic leg, he traveled throughout Java to proclaim the Three Angels' messages. He also pioneered the Adventist mission work beyond Java, including in Ambon, the island of his birth. Pieterz was known for his remarkable ability to memorize thousands of Bible verses, leading his friends to call him a "walking dictionary." He was also remembered for his diligence in sharing the Three Angels' messages and for remaining faithful until the end of his life.

Early Life

Pieterz was born on February 17, 1869, in Saparua,¹ a separate island in the Maluku region. Most of the inhabitants there worked as farmers, and during that period, joining the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* (KNIL) was considered one of the best ways to improve one's social and economic status. Pieterz likely spent much of his childhood in local Christian schools,² which had begun to emerge in the area at that time. This early Christian education gave him a strong understanding of the Bible and enabled him to memorize thousands of verses,³ a skill that later became highly important in his evangelistic work after he accepted the three angels' messages.

He was a former soldier of the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* (KNIL),⁴ the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. As a KNIL soldier, he would have undergone rigorous physical training and been expected to possess strong discipline, mental resilience, and loyalty to the colonial government.⁵ While serving in Aceh, he lost one of his legs and later used a wooden leg. Because of this, Direja and his companions later referred to him as the "one-legged evangelist."⁶

He married Atma Lionora, who worked as a literature evangelist.⁷ She was likely of Javanese background, considering that a woman named Raden Nganten Manisa Peters lived in the same residence and may have been one of their daughters.⁸

Conversion

In 1910, while R. W. Munson and Immanuel Siregar were working in Sukabumi, they often traveled to Batavia, especially Siregar, who at times stayed in a hotel so he could give Bible studies there. Siregar was known for his distinctive method of Bible teaching, presenting topics such as the Sabbath, Daniel, and Revelation, while also using illustrations of biblical prophecy. This approach attracted many people to the message he proclaimed.

One of the homes used for these Bible studies was Pieterz's residence.⁹ Pieterz studied the Bible for about two years in order to determine whether the Adventist message was truly biblical. As a result, Samuel Rantung was baptized first in Sukabumi. Pieterz was baptized in December 1912 at Tanjung Priok.¹⁰

After his baptism, Pieterz became known among his friends as a very diligent evangelist, despite having only one leg. He continued to travel from place to place, carrying religious books and giving Bible studies. One of those who accompanied him was M. E. Direja, who joined Pieterz in visiting people and proclaiming the three angels' messages in Batavia.¹¹

Batavia

In 1912, Pieterz began working as a Bible instructor and also frequently served in the colporteur ministry. Until 1922, the organization did not financially support his work because of limited funds during that period. However, with financial assistance, or a stipend, from Richard Sisley¹², an English teacher in Sukabumi, Pieterz

could continue his ministry without being burdened by his family's daily needs.

Pieterz was known as quick-tempered and assertive, yet also kind-hearted.¹³ He was also regarded as intelligent because he could memorize thousands of Bible verses. This ability led him to use a more argumentative or apologetic method in teaching the Word of God. His approach proved effective, as many people accepted the truth and joined the community of believers in Batavia who awaited the second coming of Christ.

Several individuals were persuaded by Pieterz to accept the truth during his ministry in Jakarta. Among them was K. Mandias, who later served as a union president. Another was M. Kountul, who, after accepting the truth, began working as a Bible instructor and eventually served as president of the West Java and East Java regions. There was also Brother Patitkawa, who remained faithful to the truth until the end of his life, along with other prominent figures such as B. Sumampaw and Tuasun.¹⁴

Although Batavia had a complex religious landscape, Islam was dominant among the indigenous population and Arab communities while Protestantism and Catholicism were present among Europeans, Ambonese, Minahasans, and some Chinese communities. Chinese religious traditions were also represented through temples.¹⁵ Despite this diverse cultural, social, and religious context, Pieterz remained committed to his mission. Through his perseverance and kindness, he gained acceptance among different groups and proclaimed the Three Angels' messages in this densely populated city.

Ambon

From 1923 to 1925, Ambon experienced social and political conflict involving several organizations, including Sarikat Ambon and Ina Tuni.¹⁶ Both the Protestant community and the colonial government opposed these organizations because of their political orientation. The Dutch East Indies government feared that politically motivated groups might lack loyalty to the colonial administration and create social unrest. As a result, the families of those who joined these organizations faced sanctions from the local Protestant church. They were prohibited from participating in the Lord's Supper, denied baptism, and their young people were not allowed to receive catechetical instruction.

In 1925, Pieterz came from Batavia to Ambon as a Bible instructor, although he was actually applying for his annual leave at the time.¹⁷ By then, he had already been receiving a full salary from the Seventh-day Adventist organization, beginning in 1922. Because of his broad knowledge and sociable character, many members of these organizations became interested in him. As a former KNIL soldier, Pieterz likely had a wide understanding of history and the political situation in the archipelago, in addition to his strong knowledge of the Bible. Over time, members of these organizations became increasingly comfortable with his presence. This encouraged them to study the Adventist message more deeply. One of the leaders of Sarikat Ambon even began to observe the Sabbath.¹⁸

However, as more members studied the Adventist message, Protestant ministers began opposing the movement, labeling the Seventh-day Adventist Church a political religion, a false-prophet religion, the religion of Sarikat Ambon, and the religion of Ina Tunj. When J. Liklikwatil arrived in March 1925, he found it difficult to approach the Ambonese people because Protestant ministers had already spread the stigma. This situation led Liklikwatil to seek ways to have the Adventist message accepted in the region. He wrote to the district officer and intended to meet with him in order to clarify that Adventism had no political affiliation. Later, he met with the leader of the Ina Tunj organization and gave several Bible studies to its members. When L. V. Finster and A. Munson arrived in Ambon in October 1925, they baptized several people in the Wairoehoe River. These baptisms resulted from the persistent efforts of P. Pieterz and J. Liklikwatil. Afterward, Pieterz remained in Ambon for some time.¹⁹

In January 1927, Samuel Rantung, who was on his way to attend a conference in Singapore, took the opportunity to meet his old friend P. Pieterz, who was living in Batavia. He spent several days with him, and the two encouraged one another as they shared stories about God's work in their respective fields.²⁰ This suggests that by this year, Pieterz had already left Ambon and continued his ministry in Java.

Salatiga

In June 1928, Pieterz arrived in Salatiga to begin his ministry there. He faced significant challenges, partly because he was not Javanese and needed time to understand the local culture. Salatiga was also a major center of Christianity in Central Java, making it difficult for a new Christian movement such as Adventism to gain acceptance.²¹ Yet what seemed impossible to Pieterz proved to be a small matter for God. During approximately one year of ministry in Salatiga, four baptismal services were recorded. Pastor Zimmerman conducted the first on September 22, 1928, resulting in 24 baptisms. The second included 15 people, the third 9, and the fourth 12. In addition, others continued to study the Word of God with him.²² Pieterz was deeply grateful, recognizing that these results were possible only through God's help. However, he was saddened when he had to leave Salatiga on July 15, 1929, because of another ministerial assignment. G. A. Woods, a member of the East Java Executive Committee, praised Pieterz's dedication to ministry and the support of the newly baptized members, which contributed to the rapid growth of God's work in Java.²³

Later Life

Because of his advanced age, declining physical strength, and the increasing difficulty of supporting his body with his artificial leg, Pieterz had to retire earlier than some of his fellow workers. He received his pension in 1936, although he continued to serve actively as an assistant pastor.²⁴ On September 16, 1944, he passed away at his home on Gang Nangka No. 47, Kwitang, Batavia.²⁵

Legacy

P. Pieterz's primary legacy lies in his role as one of the pioneering local Adventist evangelists in the Dutch East Indies. He was not merely a former KNIL soldier who accepted the Adventist message, but an evangelist who devoted his life to proclaiming the Three Angels' messages amid physical limitations, financial constraints, and the socio-religious challenges of his time. His ministry in Batavia, Ambon, and Salatiga demonstrates his ability to reach diverse communities across ethnic, cultural, and religious boundaries. Through Bible instruction, literature ministry, home visitation, and an apologetic approach, Pieterz persuaded many people to accept the Adventist message.

Pieterz's legacy is also evident in his influence on the emergence of later Adventist figures, such as K. Mandias and M. Kountul, who would play important roles in developing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indonesia. Therefore, his legacy should not be measured only by the places he served or the number of people baptized, but also by his contribution to laying the foundation for local leadership, expanding the Adventist identity among indigenous communities, and demonstrating that effective ministry can grow out of perseverance, biblical knowledge, and faithfulness to the missionary calling.

SOURCES

Bickmore, Albert S. *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago*. London: John Murray, 1868. Project Gutenberg.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/73398/pg73398-images.html>

Direja, M. E. "Bagian Ke Empat: Kenang - Kenangan Permulaan Pekabaran Advent Di Indonesia." *Warta Gerja Advent*, September 1973.

———. "Riwayat Pekabaran Advent Di Indonesia Sedjak Mulanya." *Warta Gerja Advent*, 1952.

Drents Archief. "Militaire voorvaders." *Drents Archief*. Accessed June 2, 2026.

<https://www.drentsarchief.nl/onderzoeken/start-je-onderzoek/zoeken-op-onderwerp/stamboomonderzoek/militaire-voorvaders>

Far Eastern Division. "Sustentation Fund Application of P. Pieterz," 1949.

Liklikwatil, J. "Hikayat Adventist Menjelma Di Ambon." *Warta Gerja Advent*, December 1927.

Mandias, K. "In Memoriam." *Warta Gerja Advent*, July 1947.

Museum. "Ina Bala Wattimena, Politisi dan Jurnalis Perempuan Pertama di Maluku." *Dinas Kebudayaan (Kundha Kabudayan) Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*, February 8, 2023. Accessed June 2, 2026.

<https://budaya.jogjaprovg.go.id/berita/detail/1383-ina-bala-wattimena-politisi-dan-jurnalis-perempuan-pertama-di-maluku>.

Onsu, K. "Ibu Kota Dengan Berita Suka Dukanja." *Warta Gerja Advent*, 1960.

Pieterz, P. "Dari Salatiga." *Warta Gerja Advent*, August 1929.

Rantung, S. "Ambonia - Manado Via Singapore." *Warta Gerja Advent*, February - March.

Rantung, S. "Ringkasan Sedjarah Masehi Advent Hari Ke-7 Di Indonesia." *Warta Gerja Advent*, No 1954.

Redaski. "Perjalanan Sejarah Zending Salatiga." *Portal Persatuan Islam (PERSIS)*, January 31, 2025. Accessed June 2, 2026. <https://persis.or.id/news/read/perjalanan-sejarah-zending-salatiga>. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "The Old Town of Jakarta (Formerly Old Batavia) and 4 Outlying Islands (Onrust, Kelor, Cipir dan Bidadari)." *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. Accessed June 2, 2026. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6010/>.

Wood, G. A. "Kabar Dari Afdeeling Oost Java." *Warta Gerja Advent*, March 1929.

NOTES

1. K. Mandias, "In Memoriam," *Warta Gerja Advent*, July 1947, 6.
2. Albert S. Bickmore, *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago* (1868), Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/73398/pg73398-images.html>.
3. M. E. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat: Kenang - Kenangan Permulaan Pekabaran Advent Di Indonesia," *Warta Gerja Advent*, September 1973, 6.
4. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 6.
5. Drents Archief, "Militaire Voorvaders," Drents Archief, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.drentsarchief.nl/onderzoeken/start-je-onderzoek/zoeken-op-onderwerp/stamboomonderzoek/militaire-voorvaders>.
6. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 6.
7. Far Eastern Division, "Sustentation Fund Application of P. Pieterz," 1949.
8. K Onsu, "Ibu Kota Dengan Berita Suka Dukanja," *Warta Gerja Advent*, 1960, 12:251.
9. Rantung S, "Ringkasan Sedjarah Masehi Advent Hari Ke-7 Di Indonesia," *Warta Gerja Advent*, 1954, 7.
10. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 5.
11. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 7.

12. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 6. There is a difference in the interpretation of the date when Pieterz was baptized between S. Rantung and M. E. Direja. Since Rantung experienced the event firsthand, the author is more inclined to rely on the testimony of S. Rantung, which he wrote in *Warta Gerja Advent* in 1954. Rantung was also able to mention the names of those who were baptized during the first baptism in Sukabumi and the second baptism in Tanjung Priok.
13. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 6.
14. M. E. Direja, "Riwayat Pekabaran Advent Di Indonesia Sedjak Mulanya," *Warta Gerja Advent*, 1952, 9.
15. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "The Old Town of Jakarta (Formerly Old Batavia) and 4 Outlying Islands (Onrust, Kelor, Cipir dan Bidadari)," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6010/>.
16. Museum, "Ina Bala Wattimena, Politisi dan Jurnalis Perempuan Pertama di Maluku," Dinas Kebudayaan (Kundha Kabudayan) Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, February 8, 2023, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://budaya.jogjapro.go.id/berita/detail/1383-ina-bala-wattimena-politisi-dan-jurnalis-perempuan-pertama-di-maluku>.
17. J Liklikwatil, "Hikayat Adventist Menjelma Di Ambon," *Warta Gerja Advent*, December 1927, 6.
18. Liklikwatil, "Hikayat Adventist Menjelma Di Ambon," 6.
19. Liklikwatil, "Hikayat Adventist Menjelma Di Ambon," 7.
20. S Rantung, "Ambonia - Manado Via Singapore," *Warta Gerja Advent*, February - March, 2-3:9.
21. Redaksi, "Perjalanan Sejarah Zending Salatiga," Portal Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), January 31, 2025, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://persis.or.id/news/read/perjalanan-sejarah-zending-salatiga>.
22. P Pieterz, "Dari Salatiga," *Warta Gerja Advent*, August 1929, 2.
23. G. A. Wood, "Kabar Dari Afdeeling Oost Java," *Warta Gerja Advent*, March 1929, 5.
24. Mandias, "In Memoriam." There is a difference in Peter's retirement date between K. Mandias and the service record from the Far Eastern Division. In this case, the service record will be followed because it is official data released based on direct interviews with several close relatives of P. Pieterz.
25. Direja, "Bagian Ke Empat," 6.

