

Central Sumatra Mission

LEROY FERRY D. P. PAKPAHAN

Leroy Ferry D. P. Pakpahan is a church pastor in the Jakarta Local Conference, Indonesia. He is married and blessed with three children. Occasionally, he is asked to teach some courses for college students, primarily for theological students. Currently, he serves the Jakarta International Seventh-day Adventist Church (JISDAC).

Territory and Statistics

Central Sumatra Mission (CSM) is part of West Indonesia Union Mission (WIUM). It covers three provinces—Kepulauan Riau, Riau, and West Sumatra, and several regencies/municipalities of the North Sumatra province. Kepulauan Riau comprises a total of 1,796 islands scattered between Sumatra, Malay Peninsula, and Kalimantan, including Riau. However, it is considered small in size, with about 8,201 square kilometers where five regencies—Bintan, Karimun, Lingga, Natuna, and Kepulauan Anambas—and two municipalities—Tanjungpinang and Batam—are located. The size of Riau province is 10 times the size of Kepulauan Riau province. It is located on the central eastern coast of Sumatra along the narrow channel of Malaka. It has 10 regencies—Bengkalis, Indragiri Hilir, Indragiri Hulu, Kampar, Kuantan Singingi, Pelalawan, Rokan Hilir, Rokan Hulu, Siak, and Kepulauan Meranti—and two municipalities—Dumai and Pekanbaru.

Less than half in size of Riau, West Sumatra Province has 12 regencies—Agam, Dharmasraya, Lima Puluh Kota, Padang Pariaman, Pasaman, West Pasaman, South Pesisir, Sijunjung, Solok, South Solok, Tanah Datar—and seven municipalities—Padang, Bukittinggi, Padangpanjang, Pariaman, Payakumbuh, Sawahlunto, and Solok. And from North Sumatra province CSM serves for 12 regencies—Humbang Hasundutan, Central Tapanuli, Sibolga, South Tapanuli, Padang Sidempuan, Mandailing Natal, Nias, West Nias, South Nias, North Nias, Padang Lawas, North Padang Lawas—and three municipalities—Sibolga, Padang Sidempuan, and Gunungsitoli. The majority of people within its territory are Muslim, but in Tapanuli, especially in Northern parts, are Christians.

Church statistics at the end of 2020 shows that we have 108 churches with 7,674 membership among the population of 18,689,679. Our Mission here has one kindergarten, 13 Primary Schools, 10 Junior High Schools, four High Schools, two Vocational High Schools, one Health Clinic, and two Adventist Book centers.¹ Pertaining to its statistical details within this territory of Mission as far as the written documents are concerned, starting from 1929 to 2020, the number of churches and membership grow steadily from 1 to 108 churches and 68 to 8,047 members as shown in the table below.²

Origin of the Adventist Work in Central Sumatra Mission

Prior to the establishment of CSM, the Advent Message had been spread many years earlier. It was on January 1900 that Ralph Waldo Munson and family arrived in Padang to start disseminating Advent message in this novel territory mostly at his own expense. This was the starting point of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church stepped into this territorial dominion. He was sent by the Michigan Conference as the answer of his own prayerful desire to minister to the ethnic groups of people he used to serve. His ability to speak Bahasa helped him to communicate well with the natives. Some Chinese people residing in Padang requested him to open English course. Munson consented to the need because he saw this as an opportunity to spread the Advent message.³ Munson's ministry didn't stop there. Soon after, Munson became the first American living in Bukittinggi (1903). It was one of the "interior" territories of Sumatra. A church was established in Bukittinggi after a year of toiling.⁴ During a war emergency, Bukittinggi became the capital city of Indonesia (1948-1949).⁵ Besides Muhammadan-rooted influence, the health ministry approach as per research has been one of the effective ways for diffusing Advent message and church planting program for Minangkabaus.⁶

Reporting to the Australia Union Mission, which was the overseeing Headquarter of SDA Church for the Dutch Indische or East-Indies back in 1905 which now was known as Indonesia,⁷ Munson witnessed some of the fruit of his personal evangelistic efforts—namely Timothy Tay,⁸ Immanuel Siregar,⁹ Hezekiel Manullang, and Lukas Sihite joining the church, just to mention few. In 1906, Munson sent these young men to Singapore to further study the truth, and they were baptized there.¹⁰

When Immanuel came back to Sumatra, a leader in Sipogu, Mangaraja Laut Batubara was converted and became the father-in-law of Immanuel through his marriage. Batubara also donated a portion of his lands to the Adventist Church. In 1911, Immanuel Siregar established the "Oriental English School" in Sipirok through which the Advent message could be communicated in Bunga Bondar, which is a part of the Sipirok districts. The Dutch government, however, still hadn't countenanced our church to be able to conduct any evangelistic work. It was one of the reasons why working the underground route was undertaken. As a result, a baptismal ceremony was secretly held at midnight. Unfortunately, it soon came to light that the Dutch government had closed the school in 1915.¹¹ But the Advent message still proceeded further. Later, it was found that the Batakland had been a battleground between Rhenish missionaries and the Islam forces for many years. The Dutch government also had their own agenda in securing its influence within the territory. It should be noticed that in 1860 there were already Dutch missionaries working in Sipirok.¹² According to the report in 1913, there were native people already engaged with canvassing works for some months. As a result, there were around 20 people keeping the Sabbath and a number of seekers for truth.¹³ A year earlier, right on the new year of 1912, the supervision for the Dutch East Indies was transferred to the Asiatic Division.

No one could frighten Immanuel Siregar and Shin because the truth-driven spirit within them was preponderant. They continued to spread the Advent message even with their own funds. Siregar alone had 20 candidates for baptism.¹⁴ His father-in-law, Batubara, in his visitation having witnessed how

Adventist educational institutions flourished in Singapore, had a dream to establish a school in Sipogu, about 22 kilometers from Sipirok. Sumatra itself, where Padang (entered in 1900) and Batakland (entered in 1912) were assigned under the Malaysian Mission Field according to the 1916's periodical.¹⁵ Undeniably, that very first permanent evangelistic effort by an American was established by our church in 1900.¹⁶

Organizational History

The establishment of CSM must have to do with the initial efforts in Padang as well as in South Sumatra and North Sumatra missions. Since CSM was in the middle of the two neighboring missions, CSM had to struggle with the dynamics of the two missions, too. In fact, CSM was organized in 1972 though the Advent message toiled within this territory had been recognized as early as 1927 under Malaysian Union Mission; and Pastor D. S. Kime was voted to take the lead for the mission field.¹⁷ Mrs. Kime and Mattie Ledell helped to serve local people in their physical condition as she also shared the Gospel for their spiritual condition. She served in Batakland as a teacher and nurse. She knew how to speak Bahasa and even Batak language through which she could communicate with women and children in the Tapanuli District. In this district, the Church had a mission school and clinic for some years.¹⁸ Kime and his wife, Mattie, worked as missionaries in Batakland for about three years (1927-1929).¹⁹ In 1929's report, the population of Tapanuli was 896,862, with only one church and 84 members. The ratio was rather high.²⁰

More than a quarter century earlier, Munson had started the work in Padang. Thus, we had Padang and Sipogu as the mission stations during Adventist initial works. WIUM, where now CSM belongs to, was organized in 1929 and was reorganized in 1964.²¹ History tells that this child-free missional couple, G. A. and Anna Wood, traveled in Sipogu, Sipirok. Anna herself conducted a home for the blind in addition to a little school and dispensary at their headquarters which could occupy as many as 10 people.²² However, in its first status as a Mission station through an educational institution, the date was as early as the year 1917 which was under the Malaysian Union Mission together with Singapore, Malay Peninsula, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Siam, and Indo-China.²³

The growth of the Advent message in Batakland was recognizable, resulting in organizing the Batakland District in 1917. The Batakland itself was actually an extending inland to the mountains around Toba Lake. Not long afterward, in 1920, a request was sent to the higher organization in Singapore to establish a school in Sipogu. This was the dream of Mangaraja Laut Batubara, too. The next year, the postulation was granted by sending D. S. Kime to be the principal of Batakland English School (BES) as well as the mission leader (1927-1929).²⁴ He had been supported by certain teachers such as A. P. Mamora and Th. D. Manullang. This became the first Adventist education in Indonesia for evangelistic training.²⁵ According to I. C. Schmid, when he visited Sipogu in June 1927, about 70 people were observing Sabbath there.²⁶

This Batakland District continued to growth. In 1936, this district came to be unified as part of North Sumatra Mission.²⁷ While on the other side, in 1939, the pioneer mission station at Padang and its vicinity—because it

had only one church in this vast area—was placed under the South Sumatra Mission with nine churches where Palembang was the location of its headquarters. Even Mampe Siregar, the president of South Sumatra Mission, made few visitations to Padang because of its remote location if the journey was taken by land.²⁸ On the other side, the headquarters of the Batakland District itself, which Immanuel had started in 1913, had been moved a few times: from Sipirok to Padang Sidempuan (1934) and to Pematang Siantar (1936).²⁹

And finally, after considering some important things including the wide of the area to be served and its financial ability, at the Year End Meeting of WIUM on December 13, 1971, it was voted to organize CSM with 34 churches at its embarkation. The headquarters was moved again to Sibolga. Of course, the division—The Southern Asia Pacific Division—had been consulted for this request. The first officers were Walter H. Silitonga as president and Ch. Silalahi as secretary and Treasurer. For departmental leaders, D. P. Panjaitan was assigned to the Sabbath School/Personal Ministry Department and M. S. Tamba for Communication Department. This decision effectively took place on January 1, 1972.³⁰ On the following month, February 10 to 12, a special meeting was held by CSM.³¹ After three years of its establishment, the first conference of CSM was held on February 10 to 15, 1975, in National Building of Sibolga with around a hundred delegates present. This Mission aimed for 500 baptisms for that year.³²

As some may see how CSM has been growing in between its two flanking Missions—North Sumatra and South Sumatra missions. After 30 years, during the Year End Meeting of this Mission, on December 15-16, 2003, another significant decision for relocating the headquarters was proposed. In the meantime, a building project for a new office was happening in Pekanbaru. This city by far is more reachable from all parts of this Mission territory.³³

From Pekanbaru, the Advent message came to Duri. It is the capital city of Mandau subdistrict of Mandau, Bengkalis. Oil Company—Caltex Pacific Indonesia Ltd. has been a great blessing to this area. The Advent message, however, moved slowly. From February 3 to April 1, 1976, a training course for members was conducted by A. J. Pardede prior to public evangelistic meetings on April 11-30 in the same year. A total of 18 souls were baptized by R. S. Situmeang as the result of the meetings.³⁴ Duri Church itself was organized on October 20, 1974, with few members only at the onset. In the following years, the membership reached 50 people, encouraging them to start a church building project. A. Siregar, as the head of Mandau subdistrict, laid the first stone.³⁵ Besides public evangelistic meetings, the Duri Church also reached out to souls through Vacation Bible School and the Spirit of Prophecy course. Apathy and even rejection from some people invariably stood as challenges against the circularization of the Advent message.³⁶

Work Progress of Central Sumatra Mission

CSM grows in various ways. The Adventist message has been shared through publishing work, health message/ministries, evangelistic efforts, miraculous events from the fields, church building/renovations, and

schools. Munson was the first to publish our message in Padang. He translated Ellen G. White's *Christ Our Savior* into Bahasa. Immanuel Siregar had come to Padang in 1904 to seek help for publishing a newspaper. His searching for help guided him to Munson.³⁷

One of the churches in CSM was the Gontingmahe Church in Center Tapanuli. It was a relatively big church with 120 church members in 1973. For the first time, they conducted a Vacation Bible School on August 20-31, and 25 people joined while only two were Adventists.³⁸

The Riau Branch Sabbath School was organized into an independent church on October 20, 1974. It had 24 church members and 55 Sabbath School members. W. H. Silitonga, as the president of CSM, officiated the organization.³⁹

In honor of Ralph W. Munson and Immanuel Siregar, two churches were each called after their names. In Padang, there was the "Munson Memorial Church" and the "Munson Memorial School." Previously, the school was a project of Padang Church to utilize an empty space of church compound. Unfortunately, the school has ceased to operate.⁴⁰ As for the Padang Sidempuan Church, on February 16, 1975, N. G. Hutauruk, during his visitation, conducted the laying first stone of the church building of this church. In 1976, D. A. Maukar came to help.⁴¹ This church is called "Immanuel Siregar Memorial Church." The building project for this church was started in 1976.⁴²

Immanuel with S. F. Sitompul also established an English school called the Englo Mele Insitution on May 25, 1907, and it continued until 1973.⁴³ After many years of training especially young people, this school had reached many young people who wanted to speak English.⁴⁴ From then on, just like what Munson had fathered, the Advent message went forward everywhere, such as Bunga Bondar around 1909.⁴⁵

Sibalanga Church is the oldest church in the area of the Tapanuli Utara regency. It is located between Tarutung and Sibolga. In 1939, there were eight souls baptized for this church and another three people in the following year. After years, the church got its new church building and dedicated it on April 11, 1975. B. H. Panjaitan (president of CSM), A. P. Mamora (Bandung), and C. G. Oliver (Union) were present at this event. Eleven neighboring churches came to participate in its dedication ceremony.⁴⁶ Not far from Sibalanga, a primary school in Siborongborong was inaugurated as early as January 14, 1974. CSM's officers—Silitonga and Hutapea, and from government officer, Simanjutak and Pasaribu—were present during the service. J. Tarihoran was chosen to be the first principal with Theresia Sihotang as the assistant. There were 40 students registered in the first group.⁴⁷

A new school was inaugurated in Riau District on January 6, 1975. The first new students for the first four grades were 40 people. The school's first principal was A. Pasaribu.⁴⁸ Church members were actively involved in Pekanbaru, the capital city of Riau province. On July 15 to 17, 1977, after a long series of preparation, an Adventist Youth Camp Meeting was held by the Pekanbaru church in a nearby forest. Fifty people attended this event to be equipped spiritually.⁴⁹ A school building for Pekanbaru Church added another project to opening

registration for junior high school in 1978.⁵⁰ And a Vacation Bible school was maintained as the annual event of Pekanbaru Church.⁵¹

Rinabolak Church is the first church in Barus, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. They also had a 7x7 square meters for a primary school which was named the "Raja Igel Sarumpaet Memorial School."⁵² Right on the first day of the new year, January 1, 1975, P. Hutagalung baptized two people.⁵³

On June 20, 1976, the laying of the first stone for the building project of Sibolga Church was done by E. Liwijaya, the director of Health Department, WIUM. It had been quite long since the church was organized in 1937. They worshipped from one house to another for 39 years.⁵⁴ The church site bought was just beside the headquarters of CSM.⁵⁵ In Sipange, the Sibolga District, another Sabbath School Branch was organized where 10 people gathered every Sabbath.⁵⁶ On September 16 to 20, the first AY Camp Meeting of CSM was held in Kalangan, Sibolga. At least 200 people attended the event. It aimed to train the youth for outreach. At the end of the camp meeting, 19 souls were baptized by D. P. Panjaitan and B. Malingkas as AY's mission director and AY's union director, respectively.⁵⁷ On August 21-26, 1978, the second AY Camp Meeting of CSM was held in the same place. Kalangan, Sibolga, is located 13 kilometers from Sibolga City. It was one of the tourist destinations within this coastal area. Forty-five camps were pitched to accommodate 200 youths who participated joyfully.⁵⁸ In the same year, there were 48 literature evangelists in CSM. Among them, 21 were devoted newbies.⁵⁹

The fruits of the Advent message also came to Nias Island. The Hilisataro Nias Church had 150 church members when they worked together to renovate their church building.⁶⁰ In 1979, there were six church buildings on Nias Island with 400 members served by the only district pastor, T. Maduwu. In March 1979, two church buildings were dedicated by the Hili Oro Dua and Hili Laja churches.⁶¹ Being transferred to Nias from Pekanbaru, S. M. Hutabarat found out that the Gunungsitoli Church had ceased any worship activities for eight years. The church building was in bad shape. He cleaned up the church, renovated it, and visited former and new members. On December 8 of the same year, the church rejoiced for the baptism of six new souls. Also, 21 people finished their Bible written course of Spirit of Prophecy.⁶² Members of Lahusa Church also had worked together for their church building of 117 meter-squares in size by their own efforts.⁶³

Chronology of Presidents

Twelve mission presidents have served CSM since it was formed. They are: Walter H. Silitonga (1972-1974), Bremen H. Panjaitan (1975-1976), B. M. Sihombing (1977-1980), Tamba Tambunan (1981-1982), Rofinus Tambunan (1983), Djinan Sinaga (1983-1989), Sahat Tamba (1989-2001), A. B. Nadeak (2002-2005), Mantas Limbong (2006-2015), Binsar Sagala (2016), Sabam G. Manik (2017-2020), and Ponimin Manullang (2020-Present).⁶⁴

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NOTES

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2. General Conference of SDA, *The Annual Statistical Report of SDA* from the year 1929-2020 with some years missing.
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4. Timothy Tay or Tay Hong Siang, among 21 boys under Monson's guidance in a special orphanage for poor boys in Singapore, had returned and resided in Padang. When he met again with Munson, he was 24 years old and was blessed with a baby boy. He was an influential man who shared his faith and the Sabbath message with other people within his reach. See R. W. Munson, "The Island of Sumatra," *Union Conference Record*, December 1, 1900, 5. Read also S. Rantung, "Tempat Terbitnja Kabar 3 Malaekat di Indonesia," 3.
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6. Berson Richard Simbolon, *A Health Ministry Approach to Church Planting in Reaching the Minangkabau People in Central Sumatra Mission of Indonesia*, D.Min. Dissertation (Silang, Philippines: AIIAS, 2003).
7. Emil H. Tambunan, *Gereja Masehi Advent Hari Ketujuh di Indonesia, Sejarah Perintisan dan Pengembangannya* (Bandung: Indonesian Publishing House, 1999), 119.
8. Munson, "The Island of Sumatra," 5.
9. Before leaving Padang, Immanuel Siregar came and learned from Munson. Afterwards he was eager to share the truths to his people in North Sumatera which Munson could not enter lawfully. See R. W. Munson, "Brother Immanuel, the Battak," *Union Conference Record*, 9, no. 20 (September 15, 1905), 6.
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11. E. H Tambunan, *100 Tahun Gereja Masehi Advent Hari Ketujuh di Sumatera Kawasan Tengah*, 1999.
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19. "Union Office Notes," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, July 9, 1929, 16; cf. *Yearbook of SDA* (1928), 174; *Yearbook of SDA* (1929), 123-124.
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21. Ibid.
22. "Sister G. A. Wood," *Australasian Record*, May 29, 1933, 8.
23. Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Christ's Last Legion*, 2nd volume (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1949), 527.
24. *Yearbook of SDA* (1928), 174; *Yearbook of SDA* (1929), 123-124.
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28. Mampe Siregar, "South Sumatra Mission," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1953, 8.
29. Gould, *Americans in Sumatra*, 127.
30. West Indonesia Union Mission, *Minutes of Meeting*, 1971; cf. Conference Release of North Sumatra Mission, "Daerah Sumatera Tengah," *Warta Geredja Advent*, May 1972, 17.
31. "Editorial," *Warta Geredja Advent*, June 1972, 5.
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