



## Pastor's Page

### ***"Revealing God's Nature"***

It's difficult to celebrate Harvest this week and all the good things that God provides for us when thousands of lives have been shattered by an earthquake in Indonesia. The government has estimated that about three-thousand people have already died in this disaster. The 7.6-magnitude quake struck close to the city of Padang, the capital of West Sumatra province. The earthquake brought down hospitals, schools and shopping malls, cut power lines and triggered landslides. The Indonesian President visited some of the worst-hit areas. "I ask rescue workers to continue working in teams with clear goals to keep looking for survivors..." he said. "This is a natural disaster, so let us remain strong in dealing with it." It was reported that one man (Dawianis Ardo) was frantically digging with others helping him - smashing concrete beams with the back of an axe, pulling at debris with wire cable and shifting bucket-loads of soil from a hole. A patch of earth, trees and concrete was what was left of three homes. One was empty, two were not but had crushed into each other and buried with earth from the mountain which slipped off into the valley. Inside were nine adults and seven children - some of them playing marbles just outside the house when the earthquake struck. "We found two bodies yesterday" the man said "they had been crushed to death - we expect to find the other 14 bodies today." They were his cousins. "If we don't find them today" he said "I will dig for another five days - that will be a week - and then I will leave them to God."

How can we as Christians make any sense of 'natural disasters?' What do they tell us about the God in whom we trust? In referring to an earth quake as a natural disaster are we trying to distance our God from it, driving a wedge between him and the 'forces of nature?' What does the bible tell us? The first sentence in the bible declares that "God created the heavens (skies) and the earth" (Gen 1:1) And Hebrews 11: 3 says; "By faith we understand the universe was formed at God's command" So, our God is the creator of the whole universe. Yet in Psalm 46 the writer doesn't seem to attribute the 'earth giving way and the 'mountains quaking' to God's activity but rather declares that God is with us as a refuge and source of strength in such extreme circumstances. Now this is a poem and so may be metaphorical language but equally the promise of God's ever present help needs to be taken seriously. But how is God with those desperate people like Dawianis Ardo in West Sumatra as the earth has given way? Well perhaps this is where we as Christians have to take stock of the fact that we are called to be God's hands and feet in his world. When Jesus left the earth over 2000 years ago the church was born and the church is 'Christ's body on earth' (1 Cor 12:27) So perhaps like Job we have to learn to leave with God things that we can't understand (the reasons for earthquakes) but like Jesus reach out to those who are in need (those suffering as a result of this earthquake).

We could celebrate Harvest by doing something about the plight of these people in Indonesia; giving money, praying for them supporting Christians out there who are working with them. And in doing this we would be revealing something of the loving nature of our God who is 'an ever present help in trouble'.

4<sup>th</sup> October 2009