

*“Therefore my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of God, because you know that in God your labor is not in vain.”*

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NRSV)

## It’s not in Vain

Clinic Immanuel in Lospalos, East Timor, hosted a team of dentists from The Gap Uniting Church in Brisbane, Australia. It was their second visit to the clinic. During four, ten-hour days, they occupied two rooms in the clinic pulling teeth and filling cavities on people who rarely have had oral healthcare of any kind.



TOM AND MONICA LIDDLE

During the visit, we sat together with members of both churches and talked about the importance of connecting across cultures and national boundaries as the body of Christ. Teams from The Gap and Immanuel Church agreed on a church partnership and found a number of areas to work together. Both congregations agreed the main goal is to learn from one another and pray for one another.

As we closed our meeting, the group from Immanuel Church, who are also clinic staff, thanked the dental team for their visit. They expressed hope that they would return again, noting that the need for dental care is so great in Lospalos. Several people acknowledged that the dental team was only “scratching the surface” in addressing the needs, a theme for this kind of ministry. From Moses to MLK Jr., Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, and thousands of unsung saints in between, a reality of faithful discipleship is that no matter how hard you work, you cannot fix all problems, heal all wounds, or calm all anxieties.

The assurance is that the small things we do in faith do not go to waste. Whether marching for justice in the Poor People’s Campaign or pulling teeth in a remote corner of Southeast Asia – it’s not in vain. And the promise is that our work done “in God,” however seemingly insignificant, will be brought to completion in the new creation.

While Christian discipleship always implies engagement with the pain and suffering of the world, we need not be overwhelmed by it. Christ’s resurrection means that a new world is underway. We are, therefore, summoned to get on board. Simple acts of mercy, words of consolation, and prophetic acts of justice are not in vain. They are the ingredients of hope and signs of God’s future bursting into the present.

*Tom and Monica Liddle serve with the Protestant Church of East Timor. Their appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church’s Wider Mission, and your special gifts.*

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