

# The S.E.A. Side

Ministry in SouthEast Asia

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## Meet the Wood Family

Matthew, Kali, Laurel, Eleanor, and Caroline serve in Medan, Indonesia with LCMS International. Matthew supports *The Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI)*, by mentoring pastors, providing continuing education, and overseeing translation projects.

## Mixed Feelings on Return to US

According to the [Meriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambivalent) website the word ambivalent is one of the most misused words in every day conversation, “**ambivalent, adjective** : having or showing very different feelings about someone or something at the same time—*NOT* having no opinion or not caring.” Ambivalence in the strict dictionary sense is what we are feeling as we prepare to return to America. Extreme frustration with the delays in our visa renewal process mixed with the excitement of reuniting with family and supporters. These feelings mixed with the stress of having to pack and prepare for our return on short notice has made for an exhausting week and a half.

In an effort to combat the spread of covid-19 Indonesian Immigration closed its offices to in-person applications and introduced a new online application system. For some reason this online system could not process our visa renewal. I want to assure everyone that we made every attempt and explored all possible avenues to stay in Indonesia. The United Churches of Indonesia appealed to immigration, the GKLI appealed to immigration, we personally appealed to immigration, personal friends of ours from Indonesia also tried to call in favors. After all of this it was determined that the best way forward is to return to the United States and apply for a new visa.

I also want to assure everyone that this issue is not uncommon and many international workers have to leave Indonesia in order to start a new visa application. In saner times this would be handled with a short trip to Singapore or Taiwan, and a return to America would not be required. However, in these times all the borders of Asia and Southeast Asia countries are closed, and thus the only country open to us is America.

On Saturday, November 14th we will make the 30 hour voyage from Medan, Indonesia to Minneapolis, Minnesota. The GKLI will immediately begin the process of applying for a visa, and after we recuperate from jetlag we will go to the consulate in Chicago to finalize the application. We expect this new application to be approved and plan to return to Indonesia shortly after the new year. We are, of course, also formulating a plan B, in which we would move to Taiwan and continue the visa application from there.

This reality is indeed frustrating, but a return to America also brings joys and blessings. Caroline will meet her grandparents for the first time, we will be with family for the holidays, and we will be able to reconnect with our supporters. Please pray that the joys overcome the frustrations.



## More Updates at [theseaside.asia](http://theseaside.asia)!

### [How to Connect with Us While We are in America](#)

Learn how to connect with us while we are in America. Check back for updates on speaking engagements and online presentations.



### [Kitchen Adventures](#)

Kali and I try our hand at Beef Rendang, a traditional Indonesian food.



Visit [lcms.org/wood](http://lcms.org/wood) to Download our Prayer Card

AND

Send Support for the

## Prayers

### Thanksgiving

- The children's success in home-school.
- Developing friendship with our neighbors.
- Strong and consistent financial and prayer support.
- The consistent and constant love of Christ among the changes and chances of the world.



### Supplication

- Visa renewal process.
- Patience and joy during our unexpected time in America.
- Continued progress on the Indonesian Hymnal.
- Successful reconnection with supporters across the US.





Ibu Yani, who watched our children while we were in Language class invited us to her daughter's 17th birthday party.



A common scene in Medan during the rainy season. After about six hours of rain we had six inches of standing water in our yard.



One of the benefits of worshipping at home is that the pastor can pick up the fussy baby.



A friendly kitten makes its way into our lives. The girls were excited, unfortunately the kitten later decided that she'd rather live with the neighbors.

One of the worries of our earlier-than-expected return to the United States was how our children would react. In many ways their reaction has been an indication of how well they have adapted to Indonesia. Laurel, our seven year old, said that she's nervous and she is going to miss *home*. That one little word, home, is so important because it shows that Laurel has embraced our family's life in Indonesia. Eleanor, our three year old, keeps talking about our *trip*, which also shows her embrace of our life here. They are naturally excited about seeing family, and we are too! Nevertheless, it has been a joy to see them for bonds and relationships that they will miss and do not want to give up. Please pray for our girls that the Lord would preserve a love for Indonesia during our trip away from home to America.

## COVID-19 Update

I anticipate that this will be the last regular Covid-19 update included in these newsletters. Both because of our family's return to America and also it is my observation that the situation in Northern Sumatra and in Medan more specifically has stabilized. There are of course new cases, but the strategies to combat covid-19 will look the same as they have for the last seven months.

**We are returning to America because the response to COVID-19 has disrupted our visa renewal application.**

As of the writing of this newsletter in North Sumatra where we live there have been 13,355 cases with 493 deaths. In all of Indonesia there have been 421,731 cases with 14,259 deaths.



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## Hymnal Update

Frustrations with the renewal of our visa mean delays for the *Buku Ibadah Lutheran (BIL, Lutheran Worship Book)*. Thankfully a lot of work can be accomplished while our family is in America. I will continue to finalize the second draft of the hymnal based on notes from our hymnal committee meeting in September. This includes double and triple checking the verse numbering for the Psalms, (The Indonesian translation used by the GKLI numbers the verses differently than English translations.), correcting typos in the hymns based on proofreading from Indonesian pastors and church workers, revising and refining brand new hymn translations in consultation with our Indonesian translator, Pastor Eben Ezer Aruan, and maintaining communication with the hymnal committee in Indonesia.

Upon our family's return to Indonesia we will have a final hymnal committee meeting to make any necessary tweaks and approve the hymnal for publication.

