

Teaching about Christmas 2

(In the last issue of *TCFNews* for 2006 I wrote about teaching about Christmas. Steve Howes replied with the following letter and suggestions.)

Editor
TCFNews

Dear John

RE: CHRISTMAS IN SCHOOLS

I greatly appreciate your work with TCF and especially your recent articles about Christmas. In Bathurst next February in our annual training morning for SRE volunteers we will have a session on the place of SRE in schools and photocopies of your first article will be provided to all participants. It seems to provide a concrete case study in the operation of SRE and GRE.

I would like to follow up your articles with a comment about possible content for Christmas lessons. Many teachers, parents and indeed upper primary pupils welcome appreciative input about other cultures. So why not include material about how Christians of other cultures celebrate Christmas? As an example, you may be interested in a skit (for either classroom or assembly) and a worksheet about Christians in Sulawesi that I have included in Term 4 SRE lessons I give 6th classes over the past few years. (The information comes from Peter and Marcelle Rogers who served the church in Sulawesi for years through CMS. Peter is now Rector of the Anglican church in Newtown.) I am sure other returned "missionaries" could provide similar information from other cultures. Why should kids go away thinking that Christmas is for westerners?

Yours sincerely

Steve Howes

CHRISTMAS IN INDONESIA

The 25th December is one of the public holidays in Indonesia. Other public holidays are for Muslims. Christians there keep celebrating the birth of Jesus until the middle of January.

They don't give each other presents, there is no Santa like we see, and they don't have a Boxing Day. But they do have lots of fun as they visit the homes of friends and eat together in the weeks after Christmas Day. Instead of Christmas pudding they eat rice and chicken and vegetables.

On Christmas morning the Christians in Sulawesi in Indonesia meet in their churches and sing carols in their own language. Then they might take out children who are orphans for a meal. They will eat together in their church building or some might go off to KFC as a special treat.

What are three ways in which Christmas is different for Christians in Indonesia?

Why wouldn't they eat hot Christmas pudding?

How would a church meeting in Indonesia sound different from an Australian one?

What is the word for boy and girl without any mother or father?

Here are some words from the Indonesian Bible about the birth of Jesus. gembala = shepherds, domba-domba = sheep, malam = night, padang = paddock, malaikat = angel, messenger from heaven.

Draw a picture of some gembala while they are looking after their domba-domba in a padang during one malam when some malaikat suddenly appear.

CHRISTMAS IN SULAWESI

(Needs two males, two females plus a narrator - a bunch of bananas on a table of vegetables.)

NARRATOR: Amat and Mariam are husband and wife who are Christians. They live in a town on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia. It is the middle of December and they are starting to think about Christmas.

AMAT: It will be Christmas Day next week.

MARIAM: Yes, Amat. Who should we invite this year?

AMAT: How about Marni? Her mother died six months ago? Do you remember her father? He was killed at work last year?

MARIAM: That's right. We should ask Marni and her friend Ana as well.

AMAT: Yes, let's invite them. They both have a hard life.

NARRATOR: On the next day, in the town market, Amat and Mariam see Marni and Ana buying bananas.

AMAT: Hello Marni, hello Ana. Our family is celebrating Christmas next week. Would you like to join us?

MARNI: Thank you Amat. Thank you Mariam.

ANA: We would like to go to church with you and listen to your songs.

MARNI: Will you have any plays like last year?

MARIAM: Yes, we love to put on plays that tell about how Jesus was born.

MARNI: Will you have a meal in your church after?

AMAT: Most of us share our chicken and rice when we eat together in church.

MARIAM: But this year we can afford a special treat. We want to take you to KFC!!

MARNI: Really? I have never been to KFC.

ANA: Thank you so much. Thank you! Thank you!

NARRATOR: Marni and Ana run off home with their bananas, very excited.