



**May 26, 2009**

## **Letter from Becca Young, PCUSA Mission Co-Worker in Indonesia**

Dear Friends,

A delightful aspect of Indonesian culture is the broad interpretation of the concept of family. It wouldn't be a stretch to say the entire population considers themselves one big family—and a happy one, despite the occasional disputes that define every family, whether it numbers in the single digits or includes 240,000,000 people, as is the case for Indonesia's nationwide "family."

An indication of this is the use of "Mother" and "Father" as the formal terms for "Mrs." and "Mr." as well as for "ma'am" and "sir." Every person significantly older than oneself is referred to as a parent. On any given day, I call about five men "Father" and an equal number of women "Mother." If someone is only slightly older than I am, I call that person "older sister" or "older brother." Every person younger is "little sister" or "little brother." It is rude to use the word "you" with strangers, so when I'm stuck in traffic with a taxi driver, I will phrase my questions like this: "Where does Uncle come from?" or "What does Uncle think of the upcoming presidential election?"

Considering that people use such intimate language with strangers, it's no surprise that among friends the ties extend beyond mere naming. I am an honorary member of several families and enjoy the role of Aunt Becca to a host of children throughout the archipelago. The latest addition to my extended family is Zaky, who was born here in Jakarta in March. In an even greater honor, I have been asked to be mother to two children from the island of Nias: Insafi, who is a beneficiary of our tsunami relief work; and Samuel, a 2-year-old whose parents let me name him.



Budi and Insafi exchange rings at their wedding.

Therefore it is with great pride that I share the news that my daughter Insafi was married to Budi Hartono on Friday, May 15, 2009, in a small ceremony in Padang, West Sumatra.

Insafi's biological mother passed away while she was young. When the tsunami occurred in 2004, Insafi was working as a shop clerk in Nias's capital city of Gunungsitoli. Three months later, an aftershock from the earthquake that caused the tsunami reduced Gunungsitoli to rubble. Insafi was lodging with a co-worker in a room above the store, so when the aftershock hit late at night on March 28, 2005, they were buried in the rubble. The debris trapped Insafi's right foot, while her companion was completely paralyzed by the fall.

After 11 to 12 hours in total darkness, unable to be heard by rescue workers, Insafi realized it was up to her to save the two of them. She told her friend that she planned to break off her own foot and crawl out of the rubble. Her friend said Insafi shouldn't sacrifice her foot, so as quietly as possible Insafi began rotating her body in order to release her foot. After several twists she wrenched herself free and crawled to where she could hear rescue workers, who then evacuated her friend.

While being treated at a hospital, Insafi met a doctor from Yakkum Emergency Unit, one of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's (PDA's) partners for tsunami relief work. The doctor offered to fit her with a prosthetic foot. When I first met Insafi, I went to the Yakkum Rehabilitation Center in Yogyakarta, Java,

and had the privilege of inviting her to come to the United States to PDA's volunteer camps for survivors of Hurricane Katrina. In April 2006, I welcomed Insafi at the Mobile, Alabama, airport after her 36-hour journey from Indonesia. She accompanied six other Indonesians who as a team came to show solidarity with the Katrina survivors and express their appreciation for the United States' generosity to Indonesia after the tsunami. The seven volunteers spent three weeks repairing homes in D'Iberville and Pearlinton, Mississippi.

One of the most poignant moments of our adventure was the evening Insafi met the owner of a home we were repairing in D'Iberville. The man was blind, and although Insafi doesn't speak a word of English, she asked to be introduced to him. I watched the tears form in her eyes as she shook the man's hand and held on tight. She sensed the power of the occasion—she, as someone viewed by this world as disabled, was able to help another person similarly branded, and a Westerner, no less. It was as though we could see her self-dignity grow as we observed the two of them wordlessly bond with each other.



The groom and bride, Budi Santoso and Insafi Gulo, pose for photos shortly after their wedding in Padang, West Sumatra, 15 May 2009.



The groom's uncle, Kas Meuden, and Becca serving as father and mother of the newlyweds, Padang, West Sumatra, 15 May 2009.

Having gotten very close to Insafi during that trip, it was a joy to hear of her plan to marry. She met her soulmate, Budi, at the rehabilitation center in Java. Polio crippled Budi's legs when he was two years old. He is Javanese and a Muslim, while Insafi is Christian.

I attended the wedding on Friday, May 15, and was given the role of mother of the bride, helping Insafi dress and staying constantly by her side throughout the day. Budi's uncle, who also came from Jakarta for the occasion, assumed the role of father of the bride.

In some ways Budi and Insafi's situation seems overwhelming. Born into poverty, both face the dual challenges of being "differently abled" in a culture where they are seen as a burden and shunned and of being from two different religions. Yet their love for one another is clear. Seeing them together brightens my hope for the future that is possible through the power of love. Out of an indescribably gracious love, Jesus Christ became one of us precisely to glorify the beauty of humankind that is reflected in the eyes and hearts of these two precious souls—the "least of these" among us.

God bless the marriage of Insafi and Budi, in the midst of the joys and sorrows they are sure to face as they carve out a life together in such difficult circumstances.



Pak Amaalwin gives the bride, Insafi, a ride up the hill to the wedding reception after the official ceremony.

Becca Young