



*It is not often we receive a report from a student that carries such a vital message, not just for them but for all of us. It is a truly remarkable, positive account by Hengki Arapan and his wife Silvia Mahdalena travelling through what must have been a very harrowing experience and be so positive. Read on. The Editor*

## THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS: Our Testimony in the Journey of Faith and Education

We never imagined that our Master of Theology studies, which began with high hopes in 2023, would lead us into such a dark passageway both literally and figuratively. At the time, we thought simply: to fulfill our academic duties, deepen our understanding of theology, and return to serve the congregation with greater maturity. Yet God led us to a school of life entirely absent from the curriculum.

Vision problems began to emerge gradually. At first, it seemed like ordinary fatigue blurred vision, frequent headaches, difficulty reading text for long periods of time. We put off getting it checked out because we were busy with college and ministry. Finally, the doctor's diagnosis changed our lives forever: there was a tumor pressing on both optic nerves. The world seemed to stop spinning.

We still clearly remember the days leading up to the surgery in June 2024. There were prayers, there was hope, there were tears hidden behind smiles. We hoped that after the surgery, vision would return, or at least improve. But reality told a different story. The surgery did not restore the damaged nerves. The doctor carefully explained that this blindness was permanent.

That sentence sounds simple, but its impact is like the collapse of a large building that we have always called the future. As a pastor and theology student, I struggle with questions that are not easy to express: How can I serve without seeing? How do I read the Bible, write my thesis, lead worship? Is all of this the end of my calling? Meanwhile, my wife wrestled with a different fear: How do I support a husband who has lost his sight? Am I strong enough?

The days after the surgery were days of learning to accept the simplest things. Waking up without knowing whether the day would be brighter or darker. Learning to walk with small steps, counting distances, recognizing sounds. Losing independence is a wound in itself. I had to learn to ask for

help—something not easy for a servant who had always been accustomed to giving.

My wife became my eyes, my hands, and my soul's strength. She read messages, guided my steps, accompanied me to therapy, and most difficult of all: calmed my heart when I felt useless. We cried together, prayed with words often interrupted by sobs. There were days when prayer was just a long silence, because we no longer knew what to ask for.

But in the midst of it all, we chose one thing: not to stop walking. We decided to continue our studies. Not because we were strong, but because we believed that God never plays games with people's lives. We went through the third semester in a completely new way. We listened to the lecture material through audio. We completed our assignments with the help of screen reader technology and extra patience. The process was slow, exhausting, and often frustrating. But every small step felt like a miracle.

We began to learn that God's light does not always come by removing problems, but by giving strength to live within them. Throughout this process, God provided many helping hands. Family, Patient lecturers, classmates who were willing to help without pity, the Disability Services Unit University (ULD) which acted as a bridge connecting us with the Rehabilim Trust, resulting in financial support towards the end of the semester and a new laptop, as well as church members who continued to pray for us without expecting anything in return. We learned to accept love as a gift, not a burden. Slowly, we also returned to serving. I returned to preaching in a different way. Without written notes at the pulpit, but with the honesty of wounds that were still fresh. We served Sunday School, sharing stories with children about a faithful God. We were invited to various churches on the island of Java, not as people who were "already healed," but as people who were still walking.

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## Chairman's comments

The last few months has seen many of the Trust members very busy tidying up and editing our constitution and other things to do with our procedures' manual.

Most NZ registered charities especially those with tax exemption status (which our charity has) in NZ were faced with upgrading their constitution to comply with the new Incorporated Societies Act 2022 or face deregistration

Our new constitution now complies with the required format and with the help of the local Community Law Office, Dep Chairman Dr Nick Lambrechtsen QSM, Dale Powles our secretary, and Ruth Nichols who was one of our exec members we got there. The new constitution has been submitted and accepted by Charities Services.

Perhaps the major change was a name change. We were advised that because we were not a Trust in the legal sense of the word and so we should perhaps be called a society.

After much discussion; we opted to be called the **Rehabilim Foundation Inc.** for we felt that we now focus on proving scholarship

to young disabled Indonesians but intend to remain committed to the aims and objectives that have been established.

Our full formal name (for legal documents etc) is now **"The Foundation for the rehabilitation of physically handicapped children in Indonesia"**; for short "The Rehabilim Foundation Inc."

Our NZ registered charity number remains the same at CC 23061. Our bank account details and website also remain unchanged. We may change our email address.

We have a new name, but our intentions remain unchanged and that is to help disabled young Indonesian children from poor families to have a second chance in life, so that they may be able to make a useful contribution to their society.

The foundation has gained a new member for the executive. Helen Corrigan has joined the executive and she brings to the Foundation a wealth of experiences with NZ government agencies, universities and NGOs, especially those operating in SE Asian countries over many years. She was the

NZ Trade Commissioner in Indonesia from 2001-2003. She is a linguist and is still an ESOL volunteer, and very good at cross-cultural communication and networking. She will be a real asset to the Foundation.

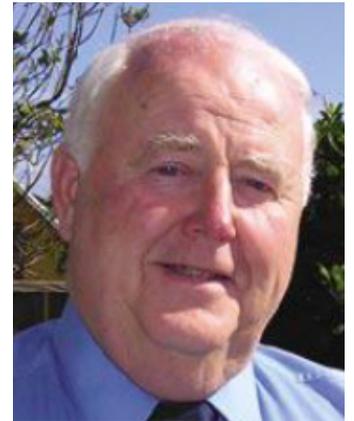
### Farewell to two of our long-serving members

One of the sad duties that a Chairman has to do is to say farewell to long serving personnel who have made a sizeable contribution to the Trust / Foundation.

Privileged to do so , but sad at the loss of their skills and their general contribution, and so it was that at the February meeting of the Foundation we said good bye to two ladies both of whom had served the Trust for more than 20 years..

Ruth Nichols was an early member of the Trust (as it was then) and most of the regular meetings were held at her house - with supper supplied!!

With a legal background, which was used on many occasions when we were upgrading our constitution to meet the new legislation requirements , her skills were invaluable and the Trust is indebted to her for these skills.



Rona Belcher's contribution also was spread over 20 years, and worked on a variety of tasks. The newsletter distribution was one of them. Before emails came into vogue we used to send out some 200 letters, hand written address and stamped !!

Today once the recipient is listed on the main data sheet, its just a click and its gone.

To Ruth and Rona, on behalf of the Foundation, please accept the thanks of the committee for your invaluable contribution.

*Bill Russell*

**Bill Russell**  
Chairman



Ruth Nichols with Chairman Bill Russell



Rona Belcher

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What surprised us was the testimony of the congregation. Many said that they were strengthened not because we were strong, but because we were honest. They saw that faith is not about always winning, but about continuing to believe when circumstances do not change.

Praise God, the thesis was finally completed, and we were able to participate in the graduation ceremony on Saturday, December 6, 2025, which once seemed impossible but became possible by God's will. A stage that once felt impossible. Every sentence written was the result of cooperation, prayer, and patience. Every page is an acknowledgment that God faithfully guides our steps, even when the path is not always clear.

The blindness is still there. It hasn't gone away. It hasn't diminished. But we have learned that life is not only about what is lost, but about what God continues to preserve. His love has not diminished. His calling has not been revoked. Hope has not been extinguished.

We testify not as heroes of faith, but as a couple learning to be obedient within our limitations. We believe that as long as we still breathe, God is still at work. His light is not always visible to the eyes, but it is tangibly felt by the heart.

Glory to His Name.  
Greetings in love and hope.

**Hengki Arapan Simarmata  
& Silvia Mahdalena Sembiring**



## Angelique Novita

**Studying:** *Graphic Design*

**University:** *UKDW*

By the grace of God, I have gone through many meaningful process in my academic journey. As of October 2025, my academic progress has been going quite well, despite several challenges along the way.

From August 18 to October 3, I completed an internship program at Joglo Ayu Tenan as a graphic designer, where I was also involved in several workshop activities. During the internship, I gained valuable professional experience, met many inspiring people, and learned a lot about working in a creative industry and professional environment.

After completing the internship, I continued working on my thesis research, which focuses on users of hearing aids type Behind The Ear (BTE), specifically individuals who are hard of hearing. I chose this topic because I wanted to better understand the inclusive world, particularly the experiences of the deaf and hard of hearing community. The research process has not been easy, as I encountered difficulties in finding participants and understanding their specific needs. However, I continue to put in my best effort and believe that good intentions will eventually lead to meaning results.



## Fabianus Caraka Pakerti

**Studying:** *Design*

**University:** *UKDW*

From September to October I have been participating in an internship programme as a designer and working on my final project report. Throughout this programme I have been able to seek assistance from others when facing difficulties in communication or needing help from peers.

I would like to thank Rehabilim for its support in providing assistance to cover my tuition fees for this semester which has been a tremendous help in reducing my parents financial burden. My mother has been diagnosed with cancer.

The support has allowed me to remain focused on striving to complete my studies successfully.



## The Rehabilim Foundation Inc.

The Rehabilim Foundation was established originally by a New Zealander, the late Colin McLennan MBE, to support the YAKKUM Rehabilitation Centre, referred to as Pusat Rehabilitasi YAKKUM, or PRY, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In addition, The Foundation now supports other disabled children's charities providing assistance to disabled children and young adults, regardless of religion, to enable them to become independent and self reliant by learning and using income-generating skills.

The Rehabilim Foundation Inc currently supports 10 young disabled Indonesians who are recipients of a Colin McLennan Memorial Scholarship valued at NZ \$1000 each, per year for four years. The Foundation is looking to extend this type of charitable support.

The Foundation depends on service organisations and individual donors for financial support.

## Rehabilim Donation Form

I wish to support young physically disabled Indonesians.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**The Treasurer  
The Rehabilim Foundation Inc  
PO Box 51-089 Tawa  
WELLINGTON 5249**

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you would like to receive future Newsletters electronically, please send us your email address to: [rehabilimtrust@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rehabilimtrust@xtra.co.nz)

Donations may be made directly to our Westpac Bank Account:  
Rehabilim Foundation 03-0539-0238389-00

Registered Charity CC23061