

A Short Introduction to Lindy Backues

Lindy Backues has been directly involved in crosscultural work as a vocation for almost two decades. This work springs directly from and finds its funding in his personal faith experience and pilgrimage as a Christian. Lindy was rather suddenly converted to the Christian faith in April 1982, toward the end of his undergraduate university experience at the University of Missouri – Columbia. Since that time he has consistently attempted to see how this new way of living, seeing things and experiencing the world and his place in it interface with his relationship with God through his son Jesus of Nazareth. He is not always successful, but he plans to never stop trying. 😊



Lindy & Donna Backues

Not long after coming to faith, Lindy became very involved in campus ministry organizations, church groups, as well as inner-city YMCA work in nearby E St Louis (he had returned to work in the YMCA after having been deeply involved there in high school.) During that time, he was involved in a variety of small discipleship groups, primarily in order to ground himself in spiritual disciplines and growth, assisted by communal accountability and support. Approximately a year and a half later, Lindy enrolled in Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, USA, with a view toward deepening his faith and gaining clearer perspective on his vocation. His principal areas of study there were biblical studies and hermeneutics as well as anthropology/missiology. This broadened his outlook significantly, allowing him to see how the very specific person of Christ has revealed himself not only in the Scriptures but also in many cultures, societies, eras and epochs. Lindy likes to think of this as a linking of two areas of interpretation: interpretation of the word and interpretation of the world. At the same time, he was profoundly enriched by Asbury Seminary's deep commitment to spiritual formation, prayer and high regard for the Bible and real encounters with the risen Lord. Scholarship and authentic spirituality seemed to be a focus there and this healthy fusion assisted Lindy in setting a trajectory which still holds for him, even now.

Thereafter he and Donna – who had married in 1985 – left for Indonesia in 1989 in order to become involved in cross-cultural witness activities holistic in nature. Their desire (and the of their team of expatriate and national workers) was to engage the local culture at varying stages and levels, learning its language(s), its complexities and its challenges – they felt that intentional communal, sacramental witness was necessary in order to allow God's Holy Spirit to confront persons with the claims of the gospel in that place. They have been consistently involved in this sort of work since that time, with short hiatuses out for continued sabbaticals and study (in '92 and '93 at Eastern University [then Eastern College] as well as for six months each in '96 and '03 at University of Leeds).

With these efforts in mind, both Lindy's time as a student at Eastern in '92-'93 as well as his PhD work at Leeds several years later were aimed at exploring how he might better integrate his Christian faith with theological approaches to his chosen academic and professional discipline (economic and community development); this can be seen in his PhD thesis title:

The Incarnation as Motif for Development Practice in West Java, Indonesia. In fact, Lindy undertook his doctoral work dually aligned to both Leeds University's Department of Theology and their Centre for Development Studies. His hope was to study economics from a biblical perspective, politics from a biblical perspective, philosophy from a biblical perspective, and just about any other discipline available to him from a biblical perspective. The last 10 years they were in Indonesia, Lindy and Donna were very involved in empowerment work of poor communities in the region of West Java. In addition, as a result of his organizations' response to the destruction caused by a huge tsunami the day after Christmas in 2004, Lindy was also very involved in relief and development work in Acehnese communities along the western coast of northern Sumatra.

In spite of this, unfortunately, Lindy, Donna and family (which included their daughter Aubrey, born in 1993 and their son, Rainey [Indonesian name: Dhika], born in 1999) – and the rest of their expatriate team – were illegally deported from Indonesia in August 2007, primarily due to the success of their local development work in West Java; as far as they can tell, these achievements threatened the local government enough to cause them to bring a variety of trumped up charges against them.

But, by God's grace, Lindy and Donna relocated to the city of Philadelphia in 2008 where one of the largest communities of Indonesians in North America can be found. Lindy is now Associate Professor of Economic Development at Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, in Eastern University's College of Business and Leadership. He also is one of the founding members of Eastern's Master of Arts in Theological and Cultural Anthropology (MATCA) program, which is housed in the Department of Global Studies and Service of the College of Health and Science. Lindy sits on the editorial board of that MATCA's on-line, semi-annual publication, *On Knowing Humanity Journal* (see www.okhjournal.org/index.php/okhj/index), for which he also submits articles occasionally.

For over a decade, Lindy has been a delegate to the Mosaic/Franconia Conference of the Mennonite Church-USA, sent by Philadelphia Praise Center (PPC) – an Indonesian Mennonite Church in South Philadelphia. He is ordained in the Mosaic Conference of the Mennonite Church-USA.

Recently, Lindy has closely collaborated with Christian speaker and social activist Dr. Tony Campolo toward the end of reinvigorating an historic mission congregation, St. John's Baptist Church, in order that it might more deeply holistically serve the needs especially of marginalized communities in South Philadelphia (see <https://www.eastern.edu/news/tony-campolo-and-lyndell-d-backues-invited-serve-new-co-pastors-st-johns-baptist-church>). Lindy also is the founder and the board chair for *Taproot Gap Year* (a ministry of PPC), that seeks to provide life-changing, cross-cultural experiences for young people who are looking for a gap year with purpose.

Lindy is the founder of the organizational change division of Focusing Forward Consulting (located in the Washington, DC region – see www.focusingforwardconsult.com). Lindy is also an International Coach Federation Certified Executive Coach (ACC).

For her part, Donna graduated with an MFA from the historic Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in May 2010 and an MA in Urban Studies in Community Arts from Eastern University in 2018 – she now works at SEAMAAC as the Community and Family Wellness Coordinator,

involved in community empowerment endeavours in the city of Philadelphia (see <https://seamaac.org>). She enjoys utilizing art education as her medium and conduit – alongside her extensive involvement in cross-cultural contexts – for revealing God's love and concern for the city. She also continues to produce works of art in her studio and in the community, as a freelance artist in the Philadelphia region (see www.donnabackues.com).

Their kids – Aubrey and Rainey (Dhika) – have, for over ten years, been deeply ensconced in community life in South Philadelphia, where they have grown and become rooted in community, learning as they together embark on the unpredictable journey their life has become. Aubrey graduated from Eastern University in 2017 with a BA in Criminal Justice and is now a social worker in the city of Philadelphia. For his part Rainey is a competitive cyclist in Philadelphia, where he also manages a coffee shop and cafe.