

## **Brief Rall Report: PNG 2016**

We took our annual trip to PNG from April 18 to May 19 with the blessing of Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis and the Papua New Guinea Mission Society. We are grateful to have had the privilege of working with the Gutnius Lutheran Church. The weather was favorable and the Seminary was in session with second term starting on May 2nd. Our 5 weeks were filled with opportunities to meet with pastors and evangelists in all 6 regions for workshops on a variety of topics: Holy Spirit, Baptism, Stewardship, Worship and Liturgy, *Spirit Nogut/Sanguma*, Solas of the Reformation, and Preaching.

We did workshops of 1 1/2-2 days at Korobosea (Port Moresby), Pogera, Papayuku, Wapenamanda, Kindeng (Mt. Hagen), Saka, Birip, Kundis, Wanakipa (Hewa), and Kandep. Ron was privileged to preach at 5 different congregations on Sundays: Korobosea, Yaramanda, Irelya, Birip and Wabag, as well as an installation service for Daniel Watato in the Sirunki area, a funeral near Birip and the opening service of the 2nd term at the Seminary.

The Mediation agreement approved by the court was signed on the Monday, and we arrived in Mt. Hagen, April 18th. The agreement called for reconciliation efforts to be carried out in each district. These were being conducted during our last 10 days in PNG; Anton Lutz served as the moderator. Some very positive and hopeful signs were occurring. Pray that an election might be held this year as the church is very ready to be unified under one bishop.

## **Expanded Report:**

4/15 We arrived in Moresby to a little drama with our entry. Our visa online was in RED and said "Deny Entry. Place on first available plane out of the country." After an hour of waiting and people in the immigration office making calls, we were released with no explanation. We spent the weekend in Moresby, staying at the guest apartment of the Pyakalia's. We set up our phone data plan at the mall and then Ron started his classes. Jennifer and I (Mary Anne) picked up the Heidorns in late morning. Great worship on Sunday morning, though there is still quite a controversy over the pastor—or two pastors. Pastor Minato seems to have a cloud over him because of a land deal. Pastor Ponuk is a shepherd but appears to fall short because of a lack of education in a congregation of very educated men and women. We took a drive on Sunday afternoon (after a huge pot luck!) to see the new gas facility along the coast. We passed a settlement of homes on stilts in the water...probably more actual poverty than I have seen anywhere in PNG.

4/18 Our entourage (Pastor Ted Wuerffel, retired AF chaplain; Pastor Mike Schempf, WI pastor and "person of interest" for Amapyaka!; Mark and Priscilla Heidorn and Ron and I) traveled to Hagen where we picked up our vehicle at Mapai after being met at the airport by about 15 people from Enga. They weren't actually there to meet us, but they happened to be in Hagen for the reconciliation meetings. The Hagen airport is amazing—brand new and beautiful.

4/20 After a day of rest and visiting Wabag and the *Take Anda*, we took off for Pogera, a priority for the Heidorns who have been gone from Mungalepe and Pogera for 50 years! The road was good for the most part. We stayed in the new pastor's house at Yendeakale. Ron taught workshops in the church. The rest of us attended some of the classes and also spent some time walking the station, visiting the haus sik, school, etc. We drove out to Mungalepe and looked toward Yuyane (longingly!) but since tribal fighting has destroyed the station, we didn't make that trip.

4/22 We drove to Papayuku and stayed in the pastor's house. We were treated royally. Lenny fixed a good lunch. Bit of a rat problem but keeping a light on helped and we stuffed a few holes with rags. There were a couple of hundred people there for the classes—lots of good discussion. I held the reading glass clinic as I did everywhere we went, and Ted worked with the guitar players.

\*At all the stops we taught people the song "O Church Arise," which Ron had translated into Pidgin (*O Sios Kirap*). We had permission from the copyright group for the Gettys, who wrote the song, to use it in PNG for the workshops. People loved the song and said they wanted it to be the national anthem of the church like the PNG national anthem is for the country. They did a great job of singing the song—especially at the Seminary. I wish we had been there longer to really implant the words in their memories. We did ask Michael Ritzman to help with the song at the Sem and he came to devotions one day.

4/24 Ron preached at Yaramanda and after the meal we travelled to Irelya where Ezekiel was having another meal in celebration of Mark and Priscilla's 50th wedding anniversary. It was really nice. They had a Philippine bakery decorated cake and gifts for the Heidorns.

Before we left for church in the morning, a *krai* started at the end of the driveway. A young man had been killed and mutilated with a machete and his body, wrapped in a blue tarp, was carried to the *ples kra*i up the hill. Hundreds of people were in the procession. It wasn't too long before a group of young men armed with machetes stormed down the hill seeking revenge. Ron and John Nathan tried to calm them, but as you can imagine, that didn't work! Only one house across the road was burned and then things calmed down.

4/25 Jacob Luke and the principal from Monokam surprised us at breakfast! We had a great visit. We wanted to visit Monokam during our stay, but the road was very bad and we decided to wait till next time when a new road should be finished.

While Ron taught, the rest of us visited Mambis. Agnes Koralyo was gracious in taking us on a tour of the wards—especially eye-opening for Ted and Mike. We then made a visit to the hydro, my first ever! I can see why Anton calls it his "baby." The road is what I call a "white knuckle, deep ditch bump road!"

4/26 While Ron taught at Wapenamanda, Ted and Michael and I went to Yaramanda Primary School. We saw the morning assembly and had some time to visit with students and faculty. I always feel a little guilty for disrupting the school schedule, but David Philip (the principal) didn't seem to mind at all. We also disrupted things at Pausa with a short visit. There is quite an amazing computer room funded by Rimbink Pato.

4/27 Ron was back at Wap teaching; the rest of us visited Amapyaka for the morning devo and raising of the flag, etc. We spent quite awhile in Pam Liu's class. She is a very strong Christian teacher and has Christian posters and scriptural quotes all over her walls. Her class practiced what they were going to do for their class devotion for the school on the next Friday. Impressive! We talked with Principal Neil Brown at some length. He said he would be happy to have any teacher and that there is a small house available (half bush, but roomy and nice except for the leaks in the roof!) Larry and Tina Matro came for supper, along with Anton. The Matros are waiting to hear whether or not there is a teaching spot open for Larry at MLS. Right now they are renting a house (belong to the Boyds) at SIL near Goroka.

4/28 Ron met with David Piso, at Piso's request. Piso mistakenly thinks that he and Nik are reconciled and that he will be the Number 1 Bishop and Nik will be Number 2—not exactly what is being discussed in the reconciliation process.

4/29 We took Heidorns to Hagen after a wonderful visit for both us and them. They reconnected with so many PNG friends! After shopping in Hagen, we went on to Kindeng on the other side of Hagen to the congregation, stopping at a small mission congregation along the way. They are building a church and hoping for a pastor! When Ron started classes in the afternoon, we stayed in the bishop's house. The next day, Ron had class all morning, I did eye glasses, and we left after lunch. (Ted and Mike were exhausted because the lights were left on last night in their room and the flies were terrible!)

5/1 Ron preached at Irelya. It was a beautiful and energy-filled service followed by a relaxing afternoon.

5/2 We took Michael Schempf to Mambis to meet Anton, who is taking him to Hagen today for his plane. We were scheduled to go to Kandep for workshops tomorrow but because of fighting we'll have to change that. Ron preached at the funeral of the young man who was killed last week. It went well; lots of people but very calm. We met with the Seminary faculty this afternoon to talk about their priorities. Lots of discussion about the gardens and compensation to their wives for the garden space that is once again needed for the students and their families. At this point, wives are not permitted to join their husbands at the Sem because there isn't enough food. This creates a lot of problems for the students and their families. Ted worked with the guitar players and they are doing pretty well with "O Sios Kirap." They are using it every morning for devotions. Ron and I both love attending morning devotions and I know that the other PNGMS guests who stay at Birip also attend every morning. We have been encouraging the teachers in that area, reminding them that it's setting a good example to be there every morning.

5/3 Ron and Ted went to Saka on a secondary road (i.e. terrible road, worse than the Mambis hydro road—that should tell you something!). The main road was blocked by several landslides which the people were not clearing because of insufficient compensation. Ron taught at Saka for a day and a half. Great attendance and a good experience for Ted. After having so many people at the PNGMS house for so many days, it was a good experience for me too—all by myself for the whole evening and night!

Ron preached at opening *lotu* for the 2nd term at the Seminary. Before the service, we were treated to a great meal in the new mess hall. Roy did an unbelievable job on the renovation! It is beautiful!

5/5 Ron did workshops at Birip today. Good attendance. He's teaching all day into the evening so that we can take Ted to Hagen tomorrow for his flight. Ted will be doing a final guitar class tonight. I think the guys have really appreciated getting some instruction. I'm sure Marty Dicke will continue that.

5/6 Took Ted to Hagen for his flight and stopped at Mapai for a load of Tok Bilips and Liklik Katekisms

5/7 We had to run errands in the morning, distributing some of the books we picked up yesterday and were surprised on our return to Birip by a visit from Matthew Faber, son of one of the missionaries from the 1970s (before our time). Matt works for Rimbink Pato, the minister of

immigration who is giving so much grief to the Lutzers and because of whom the rest of us are held up in customs. It was a cordial visit and we invited him to come to church at Birip tomorrow.

5/8 Matt DID come to church today ! Ron preached and we sang a rousing rendition of "O Sios Kirap." A lot of people came to the door today for various reasons. We did get to visit with the Ritzmans for a few minutes after church, but we don't see them on the station. Maybe we've just missed them because we are gone to other stations a lot, but people say that the children are afraid of the dogs, so they stick pretty close to home.

5/9 Classes in Kundis today. The road wasn't bad and there was beautiful scenery along the way! Always a good crowd for Kundis classes! and glasses!! (It was amazing to me that I was able to make a phone call to the States AND post pictures on Facebook—from Kundis!)

5/10 Ron was asked to come to Yaramanda for a krai, so he took a carful while I stayed home to bleach walls and get ready for Wanakipa tomorrow.

5/11 Left for Hagen at 5am amid lots of fog. I was glad when the sun came up! We left our car with Emma George, an MAF worker, and took off for Wanakipa. The people there were so happy that we were able to come. The church was full for classes. We stayed in Lutzers cabin. Last time we had a rat problem, but this time the bedroom was rat free—whew. They did eat thru all the eye glass baggies and left tell tale droppings everywhere, but we got a good night's sleep. No running water, but there was a clean stream nearby...all good!

5/12 Full day of teaching for Ron. I usually attend all the classes and then do eye glass clinics. A lot of time is spent on the porch just visiting/forming relationships. We went down the strip to see the school. No textbooks, just exercise books. Teaching is definitely labor intensive here. Broke out my bag of M & Ms today...good idea. Ate most of the bag myself...not a good idea.

5/13 Ron finished up classes this morning and we packed and waited for the plane. Apparently, one of the pilots because ill and they had to get another for the twin otter so we didn't get picked up till almost 4. Fortunately, the rain held off. We drove most of the way from Hagen to Birip in the dark, but no fog. As most of you know, it's difficult to drive in the dark because of all the people on the road. Larry Matro and Sean Harlow (who works for LCMS in missionary care) arrived after we returned and will be staying with us for a few days.

5/14 Out to Sirunki today for the installation of Daniel Watato as pastor of a bush congregation. Ron preached and it was a really nice (though very long and hot) service. We were given a huge bag of veggies to take home with us.

5/15 Pentecost Sunday! Ron preached at the Wabag congregation in town. Great crowd of great singers. They didn't have food prepared because of the reconciliation meetings going on, but they gave us 2 live chickens and lots of veggies. We had the food for supper and invited Anton and the Ritzmans along with Larry Matro and Sean Harlow—a full house.

5/16 Ron left early for Kandep. I stayed home to prepare the house for our departure and do laundry. Took most of the day to mop the floors and do laundry as well as pack up the PNGMS items—though I left out sheets and some cooking things for Larry and Sean since they will be here for a few days after we leave.

5/17 Ron returned mid afternoon. We are pretty much ready to leave tomorrow. We have our PNG clothes washed and stored for our next visit. We had some last-minute visits with friends in the evening. Around 11 p.m. we had a 4.7 earthquake which shook the house a little. We were a little concerned about the roads and landslides because it had rained for 3 days straight so we didn't really sleep very well.

5/18 we left Birip before 6 but didn't have any trouble at all on the road. The Land Cruiser from Jacob Luke was such a blessing! We dropped it off at Mapai and went to the airport. No problems with plane connections. Timothy Pyakalya met us in Moresby, we took him out to lunch, and then on to our next flight and Brisbane. After an uneventful night in Brisbane we boarded our plane to LA. And after a bumpy flight to LA and a 12-hour layover there, we arrived home safe and tired and thankful that God blessed us with another wonderful visit to PNG!

Thank you PNGMS for sending us!!