

## Kath's Report: Timothy Lutheran Seminary Curriculum Review 2015

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"The missionaries did their work very well, telling us the Gospel about Jesus Christ, that we should believe in Jesus, be baptized, and go to heaven," one pastor said, continuing, "Now we have to get the Gospel into the lives of the Christians."

That pastor put into words the thoughts, comments, and suggestions which the Timothy Lutheran Seminary (TLS) teachers, the Good News Lutheran Church district presidents, Bible School teachers, and other pastors told Harvey about the TLS curriculum review.

Harvey and Norita Kath were in Papua New Guinea, January, 2015, to begin the curriculum review. They utilized suggestions from the PNGMS Board of Directors, who were very helpful, with all their years of experience in education. In effect, the review has become a curriculum revision and updating.



The TLS teachers are struggling with a curriculum from decades back and with a lack of textbooks for students, explaining that some of the courses are from the missionary era and some are from the "middle time". Textbooks teach the importance of believing in Jesus but need to teach more fully the ways God helps Christians live their lives after the Sunday morning worship. ["middle time" means the time between the missionaries and now]

"We need textbooks." TLS teachers explain: Now we either make photocopies of the books the students need or we write the contents of a textbook on the chalk board and the students write in their exercise books. Adding that writing on the chalk board takes too much class time.

At the present time, a married student must leave their wife and children back home because there is not enough food in the seminary gardens and the seminary does not have the finances to buy rice, etc. to supplement. The monthly salary of 150 kina [ca. US\$60] is not enough to enable the teachers to pay the tuition for sending their children to school.

Rev. John Nathan, TLS Principal ("President" in USA), showing he was prepared for the review, at the second meeting distributed a sheet with 14 questions and topics to the five TLS teachers to record their responses. Their responses showed they had been thinking about the review.



Meetings with church leaders also informed the curriculum review. The district presidents ("Bishops" they say) provide a view from leadership positions and from the congregations, where they continue to serve. They describe many of the needs the Christians experience. ("Christians" is a term the pastors and evangelists like to use.)

Pastors who met individually with Harvey, could speak concisely about the problems, burdens, and trials of the Christians. They describe the ministry which now is needed in the lives of the

Christians as they live in the 21st century but continue to struggle with traditional ancestral beliefs.

Again Norita worked in the library, first by looking through two storerooms where old textbooks are stashed. There were too few copies to use for the students and they were out of date. She selected a copy from some of those books to use as a starting point for revising and printing new textbooks.

John Nathan, Norita, and Harvey made a visit to Highlands Lutheran Seminary, Ogelbeng (HLSO, Mt. Hagen) to learn about their curriculum, library, and textbooks. Their librarian saw value in Norita's suggestion to shelve their Melanesian Pidgin books in one stack rather than mixed in with the English books.

John looked over HLSO's supply of textbooks and selected a copy of 21 different books. They cost an average of about K10 (US\$4.00) each. The third time the TLS teachers met with Harvey, John took the 21 textbooks one-at-a-time out of the box, briefly describing them and placing them on the table. [It was like watching a child opening Christmas presents!] After he put four books on the table, the teacher in whose course of study a book would be used, picked it up and thumbed his way through it. Each teacher did that for his area of teaching, as John kept describing until all 21 books were out of the box.

Then John announced, "This year the library will be open." He went on to inform them that the Dean of Studies will be the librarian. Monday evening will be for the Year 1 students, Tuesday evening for Year 2, Wednesday is chapel, and Thursday for Year 4, explaining, "We can't have all the students in at one time."

Norita got busy the next day, clearing the books out of one stack of shelves and placing the 21 new books on them according to topics, Exegesis, Doctrine, etc. She then added to the shelves the books she got out of the storerooms. So, 50-plus books are in the library which will be open this year. Be thankful for little things!

For the curriculum, Harvey is putting the information he gathered into a report and will send it to the TLS teachers for them to begin setting up descriptions for the courses in the curriculum revision. New, updated textbooks will be needed. And, John Nathan told the TLS teachers that, after carefully reviewing textbooks which the ELC-PNG Pidgin seminaries at Ogelbeng and Finschhafen are using, it may be possible to trade some textbooks with them.

"The PNGMS must do for the Bible Schools what you have done for TLS," summed up the sentiments of teachers from the Yaramanda and Tambul Bible Schools. They need textbooks for the students. At this time they have only one textbook they can distribute; it was provided by the PNGMS in 2012. They would like some finances for their work. "I do not have a good house." one lamented; the other added, "I have to teach in the church building." They echoed the proposition from the TLS teachers that the Bible School should expand to be a two-year course of instruction.

### **Traditional Ancestral Beliefs: A Struggle for Christians Also**

Two beliefs handed down from ancestors are causing struggles for Christians even to this day. The beliefs are *timongo* and *sanguma*.

A *timongo*, the people think, is the spirit of a dead person. The people believe that after a person has been buried, the spirit leaves the grave at nighttime and goes looking for anyone who caused the death. The relatives of the dead person are afraid that the *timongo* will think he or she caused that person's death and the spirit will harm him or her. One TLS teacher said, "I am afraid because also the Christians believe that."

In order to help the believers rise above their fear of the *timongo*, Harvey distributed and explained to some pastors a list of Scripture passages such as Colossians 1:15, "For [Christ] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."

Harvey was asked to preach at two funerals which are held outdoors because hundreds of people attended. He made it clear from Scripture that people die because of original sin, inherited from our parents, Adam and Eve. And the Gospel declares that we will be made alive when Jesus comes at the end of time.

Another ancestral belief is *sanguma*. On a trip to Mt. Hagen, Julie and Anton Lutz took Harvey and Norita to the Catholic Cemetery, where they were assisting with the burial of a woman who had been accused of being a *sanguma meri*. When a person dies, the family may think that a *sanguma meri* used her witchcraft to cause that person's death. The family then will accuse her publicly of killing their relative. And, if she is unable to defend herself, they go on to convince the community to kill her so that she will not be able to cause other people to die.

Again, Holy Scripture helps the pastors strengthen the people to overcome such beliefs. Harvey distributed and explained more Scripture passages to help pastors. Included was 1 Corinthians 15:21- 22 making it clear that Adam brought death to all people, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

The woman buried at Mt. Hagen had lain in the morgue for several months; no one wanted anything to do with her. She had been killed by some men in Mt. Hagen for being a *sanguma meri*. Earlier she had faced the same accusation at her home place and had fled to Mt. Hagen to try to escape being killed back home and to make a new life for herself. But she was killed anyway. Her home place was the Paiela, where the Kath's lived, 1965-1969. (Check out this web link for an Australian Broadcasting Company report on the effort to stop the practice mentioned above: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-23/women-accused-of-witchcraft-in-png-saved/6043968>. I believe both Anton Lutz and Ron Rall were involved in this effort.)

## **Timoti Luteran Semineri Curriculum Review, 2015** (Reported in July 2016 Liklik Tok)

In their visit to Timothy Lutheran Seminary (TLS), Birip, in January 2015, Harvey and Norita Kath began the work on the **curriculum review**. And Norita got the TLS library to the point that John Nathan, principal, stated, "The library will be open this year." More detail was reported in the April 2015 PNGMS Newsletter.

In order to carry the review forward, the Kathes returned to TLS, September 2015. The teachers were ready to see the results of the review. Working with the teachers, especially Rev. John Nathan, Principal, and Lipa Powapen, Dean of Studies, the task turned into a **curriculum revision**. That included the following:

1. Adding a year of study prior to the vicarage year.
2. Evaluating a curriculum with three years of study, vicarage, and final year.

After seeing what the possible course of study would be in a **five-year seminary program**, Rev. John Nathan said that the courses first would open the ground, then would plant the seed, and finally would grow the plants. Rev. Larry Matro, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Area Director and former missionary to PNG and teacher at TLS, took on the task of completing the work on the curriculum.

During the September into November 2015 stay, Norita (ever the librarian) added 50 more Melanesian Pidgin language books to the 50-plus already in **the TLS library**. Some of those books were in the library mixed in with the many, many English books. Other books were purchased from Highland Lutheran Seminary, Ogelbeng (Mt Hagen) with funds from the PNGMS.

Christians from the **Korobosea Lutheran Congregation** in Port Moresby, led by Captain Andui and Mark Yakka, provided transport from and to the Port Moresby airport and furnished evening meals. Julie and Anton Lutz provided transport from Hagen to Birip and back again.

At Wabag, September 16th, Harvey and Norita joined the celebration of the **40th Year of PNG Independence**, where Todd Luedtke addressed the crowd, and "ran into" many friends and former students. On the way out of PNG at the request of the Korobosea elders and pastor, Harvey led a workshop/Bible Study for the congregation on the relationship between leaders within the congregation.

What an honor to "go back and visit the brothers ... where we preached the Word of the Lord and see how they are doing." (Acts 15:36, which is the verse guiding the work of the PNGMS)