

PNG Trip Report, October-November 2012

We arrived in Enga on Friday, one day later than expected because our flight from Brisbane to Port Moresby was delayed so long that we missed the flight from Moresby to Mount Hagen. Air Niugini put us up overnight and we got the early flight on Friday to Hagen. Anton met us, we shopped for some basic items and then left about 1p.m. Anton brought us to Birip where we were able to get settled in before dark. We didn't ask for power the first two nights because we didn't want to use up the diesel that Roy would need.

I preached at Birip on Sunday morning, and then because Bishop Nik had also scheduled me at Tetemanda (just West of Wabag), we drove up there, only to find that due to a miscommunication, they hadn't waited for us. We were able to talk to the people there and visit outside the church. After words of encouragement and a blessing (and a quick meal bought by some of the church leaders), we returned to Birip.

Monday was an off day except for trying to get a schedule for workshops organized. The Schaches arrived on Tuesday with the Toyota Landcruiser that Jacob Luke was loaning them for their work here at Birip. We finally turned the power on for their arrival and welcome.

Tuesday and Wednesday, I did a workshop at Wakumare. The attendance wasn't great (about 20 pastors/evangelists), but everyone was enthusiastic about the studies we did. They said many others didn't come because they didn't get informed in time. That would be our fault, but because it was the first one—only 4 days after we arrived, mostly unavoidable. The study on "Stewardship" was perhaps the most interesting for them, because they found it to be radically different from their way of thinking and they wanted this study to be shared with the whole church. They also found the study on "Wokman Bilong God" to really challenge them and convict them of failure to live up to God's expectations.

Thursday, Oct. 25th, was an off day from teaching, so I spent the whole day working with Roy and his three carpenters on the dormitory. We pretty much finished laying the floor on the 2nd level—so it was a good day. We were very fortunate when the small generator we were using "walked" (because of vibrations) off the 2nd floor and dropped 15 feet to the ground. Fortunately, it still worked well and wasn't destroyed!

Friday, the 26th, Bishop Nik and I left for a 2-day workshop in Sirunki. Emily and Mary Anne stayed at Birip because I thought we would be staying in a bush house and we weren't sure how Emily's asthma would do; however, we ended up staying at Joshua's guest house (at his expense) and when Mary Anne heard there would be a baptism, she and Emily hopped a public motor vehicle PMV and surprised us at Sirunki. (FYI, from Birip to Sirunki, the PMV fee is K9). Past Wabag, the roads are pretty decent. The workshop was held outside, with about 150 people sitting on church pews brought outside and set in a large circle. It was a very good course with a Bible study added by Pastor Elijah and a study added by Nispel Wasa, an MLS graduate who is very sharp. She spoke especially on issues related to women and marriage. They had a worship service on Saturday of about 200 people; the kundu meris were out in force, there were two baptisms and I preached for the service. Pastor Win Nikodemus was there for the end of the service and unlike last time when he was very confrontational, this time he seemed much more moderate and conciliatory. He had predicted—in a spirit of prophecy—that two candidates in the most recent election would win, and when both lost, his standing in the community slipped quite a bit. He seems more open to some reconciliation efforts now. After the service and some short course work, they brought in the feast for distribution. We left after

that, without eating very much, because it was already almost 4 p.m. and we wanted to get back to Birip before it was too dark.

I preached at the Lutheran Church on the outskirts in Wabag on Sunday. They presented us with some food gifts and K120 for me and K90 for Roy. We all went up to the Enga Cultural Center at the *Take Anda* after the service, because Akii Tumu and Polly Weisner wanted Roy to look at the floors. They are quite corrupted because of water and moisture infiltration under the floor. We enjoyed looking around again and talking with them. Polly was very interested in some pictures from the Pogera/Paiela as well as the Hewa. The government is trying to give cultural programs to the school children. Many of them have no idea of the practices of the *lapuns*. I think some of the funds for these programs are coming from the Barrick Mining Company in the Pogera.

We left for Muritaka on Monday and began a workshop there. Because of some other things going on in the community, they wanted to finish the workshop in one day, so we went straight through for 6 ½ hours—until 5:30. We were given a small house at the Health Center, several hundred yards back down the road and they cooked us some food. (We hadn't eaten since early morning, so that was much appreciated!)

We left early for Pogera. It was a free day, since we weren't scheduled to start the Pogera workshop until Wednesday. We made contact with Timothy Andambo, who assured us he would find us accommodation at Suiyane, the residence camp for company employees. We drove up to Mungalepe, spent some time with Pastor Pesa and his wife, and then visited with Father Kasimir (Kaz) at the Catholic station for an hour or so. We contemplated driving to Yuyane so Emily could see where she had lived, but the reports on the condition of the road convinced us not to try (especially not with Jacob Luke's new vehicle!) We stopped at the market to get some food for supper and then waited for Timothy so we could get into Suiyane. The house we stayed in belonged to Gideon, a friend of Timothy. We appreciated the stay there, especially the TV, which allowed us to catch up on the news about Hurricane Sandy. I started the Pogera workshop at 10am while Mary Anne and Emily took a tour of the gold mine, and we went pretty much straight through until 4:30. After that, we got a tour of the clinic at Yendeakale and saw our old friend, Frank Reto, an APO who had worked at Paiela for many years and patrolled the Hewa with me. We ate supper with Timothy and Gideon at the Mountain Lodge and then returned to Suiyane.

We started the second day of the Pogera course early and finished after lunch, so we could get started back to Birip. It was a good 3-hour trip with a stop near Sirunki to buy carrots, peas and *samu*.

Friday morning, we drove down to Yaramanda for the courses there. I dropped Mary Anne, Emily and Judy off at Mambis so they could spend the day there. We started class about 11a.m. with the study of the Holy Spirit and there were so many questions that we didn't get finished until 3:30 and then we had some *kaukau* and *kumu* that had been prepared for everyone. I picked up everyone at Mambis about 4:30 and we headed back to Birip. (Judy was getting sicker by the minute and remained that way for several days with a probable case of malaria. She rested while at Mambis after walking around the hospital with Mary Anne and Emily. It was a joy to show Emily the hospital where she was born and the actual room—and probably the very bed—in which she was born!)

Sunday, Nov. 4th, I preached at Yaramanda for their Reformation celebration. The Schaches couldn't come because Judy was still unwell, but the group from Mambis --Julie, Anton and

Donna--were with us. It was a very joyful service with Holy Communion and a special food offering which they do on Pentecost and Reformation Sundays. After the service, Pastor John and Pastor Samson invited us to lunch in Hintze's old house, which was a good time with good food. We stopped at Mambis to get a couple of sleeping bags and some other blankets for the Horns when they arrive on Tuesday. Our son Chris arrived on Saturday night and surprised Mary Anne—everyone else knew he was coming! He will be here for a week, leaving on Sunday, the 11th, with Emily. He still remembers his Pidgin from working at Kaiam in the summer of 2008.

Both Monday and Tuesday, Chris and I worked with Roy on the dormitory. We did a lot of planning and finished getting the floor down on the 2nd floor of the dormitory. Tuesday evening, the Horns (Jeff and Lora) arrived and we had all the Mambis people stay for supper. Wednesday, the 7th, we had a workshop here at Birip with the seminary profs and the students also participating. We had a good crowd of about 60 participants. We covered all three of the courses and also talked about the Baptism book (which Otto Hintze wrote and which we gave to 300 pastors and evangelists during our visit to PNG), because we didn't have to take the time to do translation at this workshop. Everyone was able to handle the Pidgin very well.

We got a message from Bishop Philippo that a good number of people had already come together at Kandep, we wanted to leave early. A sem student from the Kandep was marked to go with us, and he showed up with his wife and 3 large bilums, so by the time we got the 8 of us packed it was very full. Then just past Sirunki, we picked up Pastor Kii, who wanted to go with us as well. (This was a great orientation for the Horns—how many people can a missionary take on any given trip??) The road from Laiagam to the top of the ridge was bad (17 km in 1 ½ hours), but we didn't have to use the 4 wheel drive. From the top down to Kokasa, the road was in good shape (30 km in 1 hour) so we got to Kokasa at 10:00. Only a 3 ½ hour trip from Birip—not bad! There were a lot of people there, despite the fighting in the area resulting from the recent elections. We could see houses burning on the ridge past Kokasa. The clinic is closed, and both the high school and primary schools are closed because of fighting. (We tried to explain the concept of shooting oneself in the foot, with all this fighting!)

We started with a brief worship at 11am and by the time we started the first workshop we had over 200 people in the church. Since it started to rain, we didn't take a break, went right into the 2nd course on Stewardship and finished up at 4:30. We slept in the old missionary house on the floor. The old stove still worked, although the rust had created lots of holes for the smoke to escape, so we didn't use it much. We had some greens to cook into a soup and Bishop's family brought some cooked kaukau. We heard plenty of rats during the night, but they respectfully hid themselves (whew! From Mary Anne)

In the morning, we started with a short devotion at 9:30 and then did the course on "Wokman Bilong God." We had even more people, well over 300 packed into the church. They had lots of questions related to ministry. We even had people standing at the windows and door. We went until about 12:30 then they opened the mumu and distributed the pig and sweet potato. We ate and left about 2pm We got back to Birip about 6:30. Judy had fixed a great meal for us (and in fact, she spoiled us the whole time we were there!)

Saturday, the 10th, we worked along with Roy concentrating on getting two rooms finished for the dedication, which will take place on Sunday, the 25th, when the Seminary graduation and assignments of candidates will take place.

On Sunday, we took Emily and Chris to Mambis early so they could ride to Hagen with Anton and catch their return flights. Donna Meyer was also catching a flight—for her furlough. We were grateful that Anton was willing to take Emily and Chris along with him!

I preached at Wakumare and it was a nice service, well-attended, with good singing. After the service, they served a meal to about 25-30 people, catered by 3 women from Wabag. We went up to Wabag for a short visit with Samson Amean, a government official whose father had been the APO at Yendeakale during our time in Pogera.

Monday, I worked with Roy from 7 until 10. At the opening chapel service, they had a tearful farewell for Mary Anne and the Horns. We drove the Horns down to Wapenamanda to meet Bob Holst. He came in 1½ hours late (no surprise there!). We had lunch with Julie and Anton, left the Horns at Mambis and went back to Birip with Bob for an evening of visiting and planning, comparing notes about the GLC and the church in the Pogera/Paiela.

Roy drove us to Hagen to catch our plane to Moresby, where we met Sani Pepeyanda (my informant's daughter) as well as Pastor Minato and Pastor Kambuu. They dropped our bags at the Lutheran Transit House where we saw David Piso; unfortunately, he turned his back to us and walked away without greeting us. We drove to the church at Korobosea, where about 12-15 people gathered for an informal outdoors meeting. They wanted us to share our impressions of the GLC and the reactions of people to our workshops. A meal was served. We concluded with prayers and went back to the LTH with Steven Thomas. We had to get to the airport at 4am to catch our flight to Brisbane. The Lutheran Transit House provides transportation to the airport for K35, very reasonable for the 4am departure! We arrived home on Wednesday, tired but grateful for God's protection and the privilege of serving Him in PNG.

General Reflections

The GLC is solidly behind Bishop Nik Aiyane. They are rejoicing over the signing of a new protocol document and what they believe will be a rebirth of partnership with the LCMS. The primary evidence for that new partnership will be the presence of new missionaries to work alongside them in ministry. They need missionaries to assist in teaching, (Rev. Jeff Horn will be an important step), administration, chaplaincy (at Pausa, Amapyaka, Enga Teachers' College, etc.), and medical work. There is also a great deal of maintenance work that could be done on former missionary housing that could greatly benefit the church through rental income.

The workshops for pastors and evangelists are eagerly attended and greatly appreciated. They continue to struggle in responding to the spirit movements and their prophets and thus need guidance/instruction in areas like baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit. Bible schools need to be reopened and their studies closely coordinated with the curriculum at Birip. Theological materials in Pidgin need to be printed and made available to the pastors and evangelists. If the church is to rebound, it will be essential to have regular graduating classes at Birip in the neighborhood of 15-20 candidates. Right now, they are at about 6-8 and increasing enrollment will put serious financial questions before the church, because subsidy from the LCMS will certainly not cover their budget.

The final Supreme Court hearings and decision has once again been pushed back from December to late February. I don't understand their system, but it is frustrating for everyone. Bishop Nik and Bishop Piso need our prayers, as do all the people involved.