



22/03/23

Hi Brothers & Sisters

Greetings once again from Lae after a very long time away. I have been back in P.N.G. for a week now after an extended period of travel and am getting resettled gradually. The hardest readjustment has been the extreme difference in temperature! My first winter in Canada since 2010 is making the current 34°C feel oven-like, and this isn't being helped by very frequent power blackouts! Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support over the past few years, first for the borders to reopen so that travel to Canada could happen, and then for safe travels while I was away. You are appreciated.

Here is a short recap of the past few months:

August, 2022

I left Lae on the 7th after having to rebook at 5:30am – the morning of - when my flight to Port Moresby was cancelled! A stressful start but all went well after that. On the 8th I flew to Brisbane, in the grips of Malaria and Bronchitis. Despite being sick, I enjoyed my time with friends. From there, I flew to Vancouver on the 15th and made it through the ArriveCan process despite barking like a seal! I arrived in Toronto on the 16th. Home after nearly 4 years!

September

The rest of August and all of September were a time of relaxation, recovery, and reverse culture shock, along with helping Mum with the garden, getting to see friends and family, and cruising antique shops. My uncle (aged 85 at the time) made a surprise trip to Ontario from West Virginia for a few days.

October

Since former co-worker Velma Forman left Lae in 2014, we have been doing a type of exchange visit whenever I'm home on leave. In 2016 I visited her in Chilliwack, British Columbia, and the following leave (2018) she came to Ontario. During the first week of October, we met up once again in B.C., and enjoyed a trip together to Vancouver Island, a fun time in Victoria, a visit with Jim & Bessie McGeachy and daughter Sarah (PNG missionaries in the 1980s), whale watching, and a quick tour of Butchart Gardens on the way back to catch the ferry. I did my first presentation (be it, PowerPoint-less) for the Central Valley congregation at Abbotsford and enjoyed visiting with them once again.



Jim, Sarah and Bessie McGeachy, with Velma Forman at Parksville, B.C.



Beautiful Butchart Gardens



Butchart Gardens with Velma

On the 15th, I enjoyed attending the Barrie church of Christ ladies' day with a few sisters from the Fenwick congregation, and the next weekend, Homecoming at Great Lakes Christian High School. We mourned the loss of a cousin from pancreatic cancer; I tackled a pile of library work that flew to Canada with me (and got it done with Mum's help), and was privileged to start assisting sister Myrna Perry with the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society archives. Since leaving, I've been missing our weekly time together.

November

On November 10th I had the unique experience of meeting a former PNG missionary - living in Hamilton, Ontario - who had become friends with brother in Christ, Glen Robins from the Stoney Creek congregation. It turns out that Ian and his wife spent six years in Lae, and our paths never crossed. We had a good visit while totally confusing Glen with shared reminiscences, half of which were in *Tok Pisin*.



On the 12th, I travelled to Port Elgin and spent the night with my “Aunt Ruth” (my Mum’s best friend, whom I am named for), who I hadn’t seen in at least fifteen years. She lives alone and turned 90 the day before I left to return to PNG. Before I could make the drive to Owen Sound the following morning, I had to clear three inches of snow off the car, the first I had seen in twelve years! (Of course, the next weekend we got ten inches in Vineland so the excitement was short-lived). I enjoyed a visit with the Owen Sound congregation and a night with the Hartung family, before driving back to Vineland the following day.

On the 27th I did my 3rd presentation for the Fennell Avenue congregation in Hamilton.

December

Presentation #4 took place on the 2nd following a potluck fellowship at Beamsville. This was arranged by PNG missionary Janet Cope, and it was good to see long-time friends from several congregations there.

On the 6th, my roommate, Miring, called to say that our big doggy, Beaver, had died. He was 8. It has felt very strange being back here without him and we are all missing him a lot. The two - not so little - kittens are reeking havoc on the house so it isn't entirely quiet.



Beaver taking care of Susan.

Mum turned 80 on the 13th and we had a quiet family celebration to mark the occasion. On the 23rd a wild winter storm, with gale force winds, dropped about two inches of snow on Vineland and surrounds, and six feet on areas only twenty-five minutes south. We enjoyed Christmas and New Year's with family. Ironically, on the 31st, I completed three years of work retyping and editing the HET TOK book (a topical index), originally translated and printed by PNG missionary Tobey Huff.

January, 2023

At the start of January, we mourned with Velma, and the Forman family, following the death of her father, John, in Chilliwack, B.C. Not long after, my Aunt Cecile also passed away in Toronto.

As time started to grow short before my return to PNG, things geared up. I ordered a new laptop to replace the one that croaked two weeks before leaving Lae last year, and brother Geoff Taylor once again went over and above in getting it up and running in time to travel. On the 15th, I enjoyed traveling with Harold & Eva MacDonald (Fenwick members) to the Bramalea congregation in Brampton for presentation #5. Art & Ruby Ford (PNG missionaries in the 1970s-80s), arrived from Kingston, on the 16th, for a couple of days stay with Mum and I and we enjoyed our visit. Thank you for your ongoing prayers for Ruby, over the past few years, as she has gone through cancer treatment. She is doing well now.



On the 18th, Janet & Martin Cope and I made the three-hour drive to Hanover to meet with the Vandeleur congregation for presentation #6. I have been visiting with this congregation since the early 1990s and feel really blessed for our time of fellowship together that day. Presentation #7 took place, at Tintern, on the 22nd, and #8 on the 29th at Stoney Creek. In the times between travel, I spent quite a bit of time preparing for a new class I'll be teaching this year at M.B.C.

February

The 15th saw the passing of brother Eugene Perry at the age of 100½. As someone pointed out at his funeral on the 20th, no one can remember a time when Eugene wasn't there. He was an inspiration in so many ways. February was stuffed full of visits and outings, too many to list here, but I came away feeling very loved! Presentation #9 took place at Fenwick on the 19th, followed by a potluck on the 26th. I feel very blessed by my Canadian church family and am really missing them right now.

Back to PNG

I left Toronto on February 28th and flew to Auckland, New Zealand via Vancouver, arriving on March 2nd. God has a way of arranging things that sometimes leave us in awe. When I knew that I would have a full day and night in Auckland, I messaged a friend who lives in Tauranga, just to see if there was any chance that she would be near Auckland that day. Mary messaged right back to say that she would be flying in from Houston, Texas, thirty minutes after me! Turns out the timing didn't quite go to plan, but we still managed to catch up over coffee and breakfast at the airport before she went to catch her next flight. I headed to the hotel to leave my luggage in storage and then had my first Uber experience to the Auckland Botanical Gardens for a few hours of walking off swollen ankles. After returning to the hotel, I slept nearly non-stop from 3pm until 4am the next morning!



From Auckland I flew to Brisbane for another special time with friends, and visits with The Point congregation in Brisbane, and the Gipps Road congregation in Toowoomba. I did my final presentation (#10), while in Toowoomba. It was arranged by PNG missionaries Rick & Ruth Niland, and I enjoyed my visit with them and meeting many others. It was also good to see brother Steve Collins and his family. Steve has led many teams from Australia to PNG in the past twenty years. The time in Australia was a much-needed transition period, as well as being spiritually edifying.



Visiting with Rick & Ruth Niland



Time out on Peel Island (Brisbane) with dear friends.

I arrived back in Lae on March 14th and it was great to be met by friends and carried off to town for a meal of 'karamaps' (cover ups; the PNG version of cabbage rolls, only with completely different ingredients).

While I was away, the class schedule for the Melanesian Bible College was altered to phase out the 3rd year in preparation to fully introduce the new program next year (two years of *Tok Pisin* Bible classes and the new English Bible program, which will run simultaneously). The changes made for the 2023 school year include no new students, the addition of a week to each block (term), and the earlier start date of March 20!! and later completion date of July 27. Last week was a hustle to get ready but we accomplished it, and I am now slowly getting caught up on reports for August, 2022 and on. I won't have a literacy class until later this year, so will use the mornings to complete the remaining unprocessed books and finish preparing for my new class.

The start of M.B.C. classes, this week, has been positive, despite several students not yet arriving. We are very grateful to have Abraham & Rachael Mesa back with us as teachers. Thank you for your prayers for them as Abraham was diagnosed and underwent treatment, last year, for Guillain Barre Syndrome. He is doing well.

Prayer Points:

1. The Melanesian Bible College – for this time of transition into a new schedule, and for the students who have not yet arrived.
2. Brother Rick Niland in Toowoomba, Australia – recovering from spinal surgery.
3. Roommate Miring – down with Malaria and high blood pressure.
4. Brother Taylor David, and wife Robyn – for ongoing physical healing 1½ years after his brain surgery, and for safety (he still doesn't have a titanium plate and has weakness in one side of his body, making him frequently off-balance).
5. For myself as I readjust after a longer-than-usual time away. I seem to have given the expression “*travel bug*” a new meaning: the Malaria that I was treating when I left last August has been to Canada and back! (no, not at all contagious!). A positive slide this week has shed light on the intense tendon and muscle pain I've been experiencing for the past few months. Last August's treatment didn't work!

Thank you again for your prayers. Although I don't expect to receive a reply to this newsletter, your emails are always welcome.

May God continue to bless you.

Love and blessings in HIM,

Ruth

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