



Hi again from Lae. Suddenly it is 'winter' (below 30°C and raining a lot). A couple of nights ago I was shivering and decided to check the temperature. It was 26°C! It actually is a great relief after months of unusually dry and overly hot.



This is what happens when the weather gets cool in Lae.



Jango is growing! He now weighs around 10Kg and is part T-Rex.

March and April saw the start of this year's session at the Melanesian Bible College. We resumed on March 18th with fourteen students. Since then we have acquired another fulltime student, and two young girls who are coming part-time. We are still waiting for the wife of one of the English students who had to wait to travel due to cultural obligations following the birth of their grandchild. With her arrival we will have eighteen students, all doing their first year of studies.

Our students for 2024 are:

In the men's Tok Pisin program –
Osu, from the M.B.C.congregation,
Nickson, from Weslam,in Morobe Province,
Yamen, from Buloloin Morobe Province, and
Jonam, from Omuruin Madang Province.

In the women's Tok Pisin program –
Macklyn, wife of Yamen, from Bulolo, Morobe Province, and
Moreen, wife of Jonam, from Omuru, Madang Province.

In the English program –
Sere & Lahui from Lealea in Central Province. Lahuiis arriving on May 14th.
Uyuk & Leone from Omuru in Madang Province,
Labisa from Tami Island in Morobe Province,
Daniel & Donnah from Zumangurun in Morobe Province,
Yaing from the BoundaryRoad congregation in Lae,
Paul from the TentCity congregation in Lae, and
Bertha & Olive from the M.B.C. congregation. Both are part-time.

And in the Ritrait (“read write” or literacy) program:
Jenny,wife of Nickson, from Weslam, Morobe Province, and
Moreen (Omuru, Madang Province).

If you have been a regular reader of this report over the past few years, you may have noticed that some of the names of our English students have come up in past reports. Seven of the eleven students graduated from the Tok Pisin program last year! We have been very grateful to welcome them back for the inaugural year of the English program. In a way it is a trial run, but so far it has been running smoothly and has been well received. We have appreciated being able to start off with students whom we know and who will give helpful feedback about what could or should be done differently.

We now have twelve teachers at M.B.C. Jab Mesa, Miamel Golabe, Joe Dobadoba, and Michael Tatara continue to teach in the men’s Tok Pisin program. Becky Mesa, Dogo Tatara, Rachael Mesa, Miring Maronga, and I, continue with the Tok Pisin women’s program. And Jab Mesa, Abraham Mesa, Arthur Tatara,and William Kewo are now teaching in the English program. William is a new addition this year. He completed the S.I.B.I. program in Singapore, along with Arthur, a few years ago. Sadly, William lost his mother, Rose Kewo, the weekend after school started.



The 2024 M.B.C. school photo minus some of the teachers (Miamel, Dogo, Rachael, Arthur). I was taking the photo.

The literacy program got off to a good start but encountered a few major bumps not long into Block (term) One. My two students are very different in many ways. Jenny has been a Christian for awhile and, at the time, was expecting her 5th or 6th child.

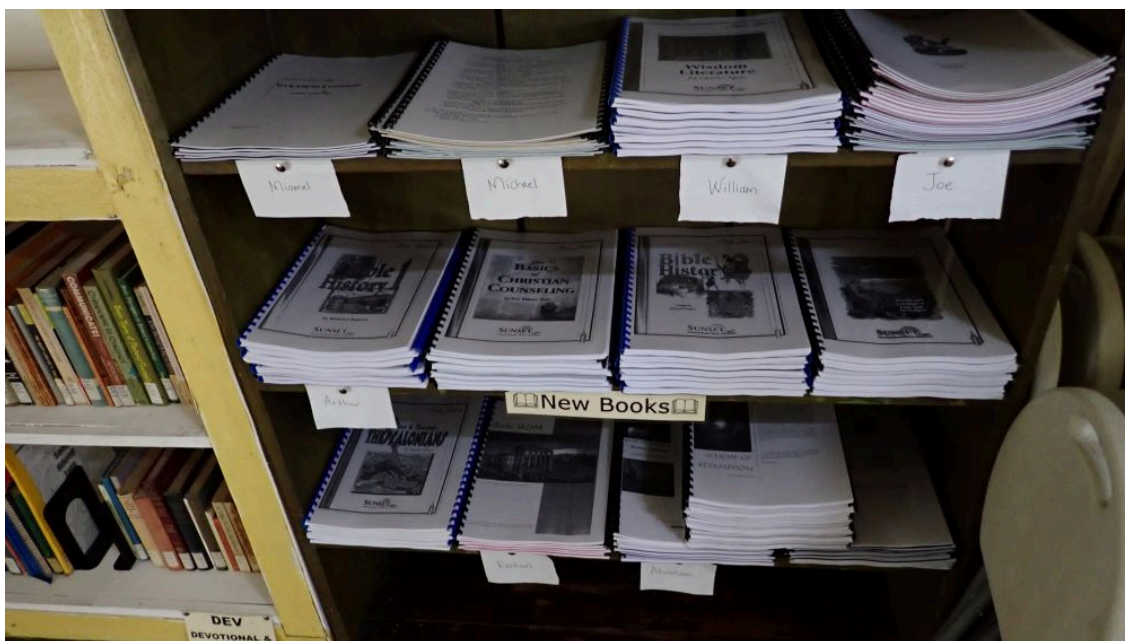
She is perhaps 35. Moreen came as a visitor, with her year-old, firstborn son. She is around 20. Jenny never went to school and came with absolutely no idea. Moreen was forced to drop out of Grade One when her father died, but she grew up beside an elementary school (kindergarten, grades 1-2 here) and learned a lot by default. Jenny struggled to understand what she was being taught from day one; Moreen picked up everything and did it perfectly from the start and reads about around a Grade Three level.

Now, eight weeks in, and into Block Two, things have changed greatly. It wasn't long before I realized that I would have to approach teaching both differently, so I divided them into two classes. Moreen came from 7:40-10:00am, with twenty minutes of chapel in the middle. Jenny came from 10:00am-12:00pm. It went well for about a week and then things went pear-shaped with Jenny's pregnancy. She hadn't been to an aid post or hospital before coming to Lae, and it was apparent that she was nearing her delivery time. We got her into the nearest clinic and after about three weeks of sending her back and forth, they finally checked and discovered that the baby hadn't turned properly. By then she was having a lot of discomfort and some bleeding. They told her the pregnancy was at eight months. She came to school the morning she found out, and a day or two later (last weekend) she delivered a baby boy. It was a breach delivery, and they had to pull the baby. Since then he hasn't responded well and remains in the nursery at our local hospital. Jenny is alright, but is struggling to understand why things have gone as they have. She is also still in the maternity ward at Angau, although there has been talk of discharging her and having her visit the baby daily. Nickson's schooling is also being badly affected. Please hold this family, including their other children, in prayer.

Moreen and I continue to meet for literacy class each morning, finishing at 10:00am. Afterward she joins Macklyn for two Tok Pisin Bible classes. We were overjoyed when she decided to be baptized on April 28th. We are working on reading, spelling, copying, and other skills, and have plans to read the books of Ruth and Esther in coming weeks. I will give her short tests on both in preparation for entering the women's Tok Pisin program full time as of Block Three, starting in mid-June.



In recent years, the selection and quantity of materials being imported into P.N.G. has decreased and the costs have risen. When we first started printing the song book at M.B.C in 2014, the retail cost was K5.00 (CN\$1.90). The current retail cost is K12.00 (K4.60). Each time we print a lot of song books, I wonder if we will be able to get the materials needed to finish it. It happened this time and we accidentally went back to our roots as a result. The photo shows the original Tok Pisin song books (in the background) which were printed by the church in 1981. The blue song book (front left) is what we usually produce. The most recent lot, however, is green. As the economy here worsens, I often wonder how long we will be able to continue to produce printed materials on a regular basis.



Some of the printed materials for our students for Block One, thanks to your prayers and the generosity of two congregations.

Apart from the ongoing work at M.B.C., I've also been busy preparing for our upcoming teams. We now have three sets of visitors coming in June and July from the U.S. Former P.N.G. missionaries, Woody & Judy Square, and team (10 in total) will be here from June 27th-July20th. While they are out of town, brother Sandy Detherage, and grandson Tyler, from Texas, will be staying with us from July 13th-18th. Then we have a team of four – Jimmy, Kim, Jay, and Randy – coming from Highland church of Christ in Tennessee, on July 23rd. Please hold each of our visitors in prayer as they prepare to travel, and please hold us in prayer as well as we prepare to host large groups again. Since 2019, we've only had on visitor at a time!

Other highlights from March & April:

- After months of typing, I finished entering the M.B.C. Library's card catalogue into Excel. It has since been used and is working well.
- Tok Pisin student, Macklyn, was also baptized into Christ during March.
- The M.B.C. congregation's ladies' class restarted in April after several years of not meeting (thank you Covid!). We meet on the second Saturday of each month. This morning was our second class, and the students led singing and taught the class.
- We have a new hauskuk ("house cook"; outdoor cooking area with a roof) thanks to brothers Michael & Piruwe (pronounce "Peer-oo-way" 😊). The old structure was on the point of collapse.

I want to take this time to say thank you to each of you for your prayers regarding the special request at the end of the last newsletter, in response to my appeal for financial assistance toward M.B.C.'s photocopying costs (student books for all three of the classes). Two congregations – one in Scotland and the other in Canada – stepped up and provided the money needed for this year, and possibly into next! It has been very greatly appreciated and the students and teachers have been grateful for the materials we've been able to provide so far. Thank you. Once the school year is complete, I will provide a breakdown of costs for each term.



New Christians Macklyn and Moreen.

Prayer Points:

1. For our current session at the Melanesian Bible College. We are now into Block Two and will wrap up the school year in late July.
2. For new Christians, Macklyn and Moreen, and for Moreen's husband, Jonam, who is with us as a visitor to the church.
3. For Jenny and family, and the new baby, for healing and comfort for all.
4. Three families mourning the loss of loved ones:
 - The Kewo family (mentioned above).
 - The Titipu family, following the sudden death of father, Timothy, in March.
 - And for Jimi & Ziring, following the death of son Migi in March. I have asked for prayers for Migi in the past. At the time of the March, 2021 report he was hospitalized with cranial Tuberculosis. Sadly, his T.B. reoccurred in recent months and he lost his fight. A recent report stated that P.N.G. is the leading country in the Pacific for cases of T.B., and that 30,000 cases are reported here each year. That is perhaps 2.5-3.0% of the population (no census done since 2011).

5. Our upcoming visitors: Woody & Judy and team, Sandy & Tyler, and for the team coming from Highland.

6. The inaugural Morobe Provincial Ladies' Camp is scheduled for October 24-27th. The M.B.C. congregation is hosting this camp at Zumangurun village, a couple of hours outside of Lae. Fund-raising continues to go well.

7. The 7th Morobe Provincial Youth Camp (2025) will also be hosted by M.B.C. Please pray for the planning and fund-raising for this as well.

8. Brother Rick Niland in Toowoomba, Australia – for continued healing. A recent report from sister Ruth Niland was very positive and shows that our prayers are helping.

9. Brother Taylor and wife Robyn – continued healing and open doors for further medical assistance for Taylor.

I really appreciate hearing from you (but don't expect to!). Please bear with me if you write and don't get a quick reply. Between the current busy schedule and the very frequent blackouts we've been experiencing (one this week was 32 hours long!) I don't get to the laptop and email every day.

All of God's blessings.

With love in HIM,

Ruth

