

Hello again from Lae. I pray that you are well and growing in Christ each day. It has been two months since the last report and the time has sped by. I am now preparing for leave and things are coming together slowly, but not without hiccups, such as waiting for the bank here to issue a credit card I ordered (two weeks ago) in order to pay for the airline tickets, and also the Air Canada strike and flight cancellations (yes, I had planned to book with them!). I appreciate your ongoing prayers and know that this trip will come together in His timing. Here is a recap of the past couple of months:

June-July

Block (term) 3 at the Melanesian Bible College started on June 16th and the students were kept very busy over the following six weeks. I have been running the library sessions since 2014, and this marked the first block in which not a single student used the library! When I asked a couple of them, they told me that they were up to their ears in work in the classroom and just hadn't had time. 🧐



Graduating literacy students Moreen (left) and Jenny (right) and their families.

Jenny and I continued our literacy battle together and made great strides through June and July. When school ended, she still couldn't cope efficiently with numbers, and we pretty much gave up on printing, but SHE WAS READING!!! albeit very slowly. Thank you for your prayers for both of us! Sight problems were one of the contributing factors and using the Tok Pisin Baibel (Bible) app on my phone helped as we could increase the font size greatly. We also went for an eye test and got reading glasses for her, which should help to some degree. Please continue to pray for her. Her husband, Nickson, promised to continue to work with her in coming months. They are also expecting another baby soon.

Lendo Bal, a brother and evangelist from Chimbu Province and former board member for M.B.C., suffered a stroke during the National Men's Workshop, hosted this year, from June 26th-29th, by the Pare congregation. He ended up hospitalized in Port Moresby until his passing on the night of July 17th. He was a well-loved and well-respected brother in Christ, and his death has left many Christians grieving. Not long before brother Bare's death (reported in the last report), Lendo stepped in to work with the Dinima congregation. Now, within the space of less than four months, the congregation has lost two preachers. Please also hold them in prayer. There has been an increasing amount of community interest, and they are now left without a preacher (Matthew 9:38).

The latter half of July was busy as we neared the end of the school year. On the 19th, the students hosted the 'One Day Youth Camp', which they have prepared for over the past two years. It went well and was well attended by several of the local congregations. On the 21st we had our last day of classes and then spent the 22nd preparing for the closing meal which took place on the 23rd (also Remembrance Day here). The 24th was cleanup time on campus, including the classrooms, chapel and grounds. And finally, the 33rd Tok Pisin and 1st English graduations were held on the 26th, bringing the 2025 M.B.C. session to a close. Incidentally, 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of having a church of Christ-run Bible school in Lae: Lae Bible School was started in 1975, becoming The School of Life in 1979, and eventually The Melanesian Bible College in 1988. Our students left us during the 28th - 30th, and it was bittersweet saying goodbye as we both rejoiced with them and mourned their leaving. Many of them have been with us for five years now.



Ladies' Class during the One Day Youth Camp



2025 MBC graduating classes: Tok Pisin (left) and English (right)



Saying goodbye

August

The start of August brought on full-blast preparation for traveling to Canada, as well as catchup work from the past 5 months of school. At the library, the last of the books on hand for processing were completed and shelved as of August 8th, bringing the library to just over 4,000 volumes, and the Excel card catalogue has been updated. This is a mountain I've been climbing since 2013 and it feels a bit unbelievable that we currently have NOTHING left to process! On August 11th, Miring and I cleaned, packed up and covered everything for the coming months of inactivity.



Aaarrggghh!!!!
Cat fur??!!

I have also started some cleaning projects at the house as I wait, as well as doing the 'monthly' cleaning at the Missionary Centre. Our tropical houses are all built on posts and are nearly equal parts wall and 'flaiwaia' (fly wire: screens). Some of the windows have glass louvre blades. We rely on ceiling fans, which run practically 24-7 (when the power is on, which it isn't as I write this). Every few months, we have to remove the louvres, for washing, and vacuum and brush the screens to get rid of the build-up of dust and cat fur. *How does a country with so much rain, get so dusty?!!* They were a little more overdue than usual this time due to school being in session, and I spent hours last week just on the living room and kitchen windows. We have since finished the veranda as well, with just a couple of rooms left to do. It is truly wonderful to be able to see out and feel the wind coming in. 😊

August also saw the completion of 350 more song books for this year, bringing the number we have produced at M.B.C., since 2014, to 4,250. I have decided to investigate whether an app could be developed, and plan to pursue this while in Canada. If you have any experience, it would be appreciated along with your prayers. After 33 years here, I feel very dinosaur-ish with regards to some newer technologies. At present, M.B.C. is the only source of the *Song bilong Lotu* song book, and it has been getting more difficult to keep up with demand as the church continues



The Tok Pisin students
helping with collation



Recent display of materials
available through MBC

to grow in P.N.G. Maintenance on our copier has got more expensive (and it is currently broken down again now!), and often I am unable to get toner, book binding tape, or the plastic covers we now use. It recently became more apparent to me, as well, that the technicians don't do what you expect them to. Thanks to YouTube, I now know how to properly clean two main parts of the machine, and it had never been done on this machine before! We also have limited ability to get printed song books to people in the southern region due to the cost of postage and the lack of roads. Having an (hopefully free) app available, in addition to the printed books, would be greatly helpful to everyone.

Papua New Guinea is the most linguistically diverse nation on Earth and has a unique culture for every language. There are also times of division between the coastal and highlands peoples because of the vast difference in beliefs and practises. This is further complicated when families have lived in Lae, or other towns, for generations and have lost much of their cultural identity and language, not to mention the cultural values that go with them. The current economic climate is also impacting everyone. Crime becomes the norm, along with drugs and alcoholism.

Over the first weekend in August, an ethnic clash took place in the settlement beside us, spilling over onto the church property. It was started by someone from the Timbe people (coastal), who stole something. A Wabag (highlander) betelnut seller witnessed the theft and called the police. After the thief's apprehension, some of his family showed up and knifed the Wabag man for his trouble. He then turned around and recruited some of his extended family from another area of Lae, who came on the 4th and wreaked havoc on anyone of coastal appearance who got in the way, Timbe or otherwise. The result was chaos with four intentionally run over and/or hacked to death, others injured, and a community (and nation) in absolute shock and anger. Word went around that the coastal people were planning to revolt against the highlanders but prayer has worked. Thankfully, arrests have been made on both sides, and the Morobe government has been working with the Timbe community, who have not retaliated. The past two weeks have been quiet and tense, but the local schools have finally resumed and people are starting to breath again. Please pray for the Kapiak St. settlement and for P.N.G. as a whole. We are approaching the 50th anniversary of independence (September 16th) and more and more crazy is happening.

Through it all, construction of the new fence (wall!) for the neighbouring property continues. The water pipe has been broken several more times since the last report, including this morning, but we are taking it in stride, getting along alright with the workers, and looking forward to seeing the final outcome.



The new fence. The original sheet iron fence hasn't been fully removed yet.



Work continues at the back of the property.

Prayer Points

1. Former literacy student Jenny and family – for continued learning in the village and for her current high-risk pregnancy.
2. All of MBC 2025 grads and for transition back into their lives in their villages in Morobe, Madang, and Central Provinces.
3. The Bal family and the Dinima, Duman and Mata congregations in Chimbu Province, and others, mourning the loss of brother Lendo Bal.
4. The Wabag-Timbe conflict in our neighbouring settlement.
5. My plan to travel to Canada soon, and for all related hiccups!
6. MBC as we work towards the retirement of several of our teachers - Joe Dobadoba in 2026, Michael & Dogo Tatara in 2027, and Miamel Golabe in 2028 – and for God to raise up godly men and women to continue His work at MBC.
7. The Mesa family, mourning the loss of son, husband and nephew, Seselo, in Vanuatu.
8. The upcoming Independence celebrations (50 years on September 16th) and for safety and the increased crime rate as the date approaches.
9. The Morobe Provincial Youth Camp, which will be held in December 18th-22nd. We have been working throughout last year and this to raise the funds to host the camp and anticipate many attending. We also look forward to having Steve & Gill Raine with us, from the South Pacific Bible College in New Zealand, for the camp.
10. Polio has returned to P.N.G. There have been 31 confirmed cases since May, in at least 6 provinces, and a nationwide immunization campaign is underway.



MBC Teachers (l-r): Dogo, Miring, Michael, Rachael, me, Joe, Miamel, Jab, Becky, Abraham, Arthur, & William

I always appreciate hearing from you, but don't expect to. I'm also looking forward to seeing many of you during my upcoming leave. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or comments.

With love and prayers in HIM,
Ruth

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