

2018 Australia-PNG Mission Trip Report



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Looking for more?

We're launching a web page where you can find this information, plus a full gallery of photos and more.

Keep an eye out for more info.

Trip Leader's Report

By Stephen Collins



The team of seven Australians and four PNG locals at Nadzab airport, beginning their trip.

I guess I should begin with thanks. Thanks to my God who is ever patient with me and continues in his unfailing love for me. Thanks to my wife, Tracey, who for the past 18 years has supported me and given me her blessing for the PNG work. Thanks to my family who cheer me on. Thanks to my greater family, the church across Australia, who also cheer us on and support this great work. Thanks to David for leading with me—it would not be anywhere near as much fun without him by my side. Thanks to David's wife, Chris, for supporting him and the work we do ...and again thanks to God for entrusting us with this team and His plan.

Sometimes here in Australia, we can get frustrated with the 'thinking of man' and long for Christ's return for our own benefit, and wonder why He has not come back yet. Then I go to PNG and see how hungry people are to come to know the Lord and I realize that perhaps the reason He has not come back yet could be because of these ones He loves. It is his desire that none should perish.

Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

History

PNG Mission 2018 is the result of a work that started when Tom and Rens Bunt finished their seven years of fulltime ministry in PNG in 1984. Their time was spent in the Waria Valley and later in Wau. Tom committed to returning to keep encouraging the church family there as often as he could—mostly every second year as a team of two or three. In 2000, I joined the team and after a few more tours took over from Tom when he could no longer make the journeys. While Tom wanted to continue the work, he also understood succession planning and that I might need someone to share the burden. Thus, he recruited David Payne. ►



Preparation

A lot of preparation goes into a trip like this and I am so thankful for modern technologies making communication via email much simpler than snail mail days! Planning starts about 12 months out, but the rubber really hits the road with six months to go. We are very fortunate to have Ruth Zimmerman, Wesley Wosse and Joe Dobadoba on the ground in PNG to help. This year we decided to spend seven days in the Waria Valley, four days in the Menyamya district and four days in Lae, along with two international travel days.

Team

What an amazing team. It has been my experience that each time, the team we have is perfectly suited to the trip needs, while the trip meets their exact needs for growth and learning. This year was no different. In the early stages we had only three takers from Australia for the trip, however that soon grew to seven. The team in PNG also grew from our traditional size. In years gone by we had only Wes; then Wes and Tupolin; then Wes, Tupolin and Joe and, this year, Wes, Tupolin,

Joe and Arthur. At the last minute, Wes and Tupolin could not travel due to Wes contracting Typhoid. So at short notice, Joe's wife Kamau and daughter Kerry-Anne made themselves available to join us. This totalled 11 travelling team members. Everyone came as a servant: to God; to those we would encounter along the way; and to each other. The size of the team meant we needed two aircraft to transport us and all our supplies. It took some negotiating to secure a deal where we would all get to our destinations on the same days. Everyone would be together all the time... well, mostly! It also meant that we needed slightly larger sleeping quarters than previous years, so the villages we stayed in built and modified buildings to take care of our needs.

Challenges

FINANCES: Prices overall had risen by 30% compared to our 2015 trip, and some previous benefactors were no longer able to support us. This meant contacting every congregation across Australia, to secure financial backing.

WEATHER: The roads to Menyamya were in a poor state to ensure safe, reliable travel, so we had to fly there, also. Flights are always weather-dependent in PNG, and this year the outcome was an extra day spent in ▶





Above: Scenes from Lae and the Waria Valley. Credit to Jack Hughes, who provided most of the photos in this report.

the Waria. It also cast doubt that we could fly out of Menyamyra on the Friday—the day before we were to fly home to Australia. As it happened, we took off just as driving rain started. If we had been two minutes longer, we would not have flown out that day!

MEETING NEEDS: This can be challenging, as sometimes we see the physical needs that jump right out, but the spiritual needs are not so clear. We have to get out of the way and let God lead us and reveal to us what those needs are. God blessed us by opening our eyes and hearts to this and so we were able to help greatly.

Highlights

A long list! Seeing my PNG family face-to-face once again • Seeing the team gel very quickly and allowing God to work in them to step into their

greatness with humility and servitude • 27 congregations and nine individuals who financially supported the work. In past years we had six or seven. This really excites me, because while every congregation is autonomous, we are all part of the Body of Christ and are able to work together to display the glory of God • 22 New Christians, and 53 others who repented and returned to the church • Visiting Tent City congregation for the first time on our first Sunday in Lae. In 1982 a big flood in Lae washed away many houses. The church of Christ was holding a national Kebung in the Highlands at the time and were not directly affected, but many people lost their lives and were displaced. The Australian army came in and among other things provided thousands of tents to house the people. The church organized and sent

down much-needed food from the Highlands to Lae and kept people alive. From there, a church was planted and today we see Tent City flourishing as perhaps the largest congregation in Lae • The congregation in Orouba that was really hurting due to murders of Christians and all sorts of complexities in their village came together in repentance and forgiveness to be healed by God’s love • Seeing the joy throughout a congregation who had been pleading with us for several years to visit. We had never previously been to Kapini and they were so grateful for our willingness to journey there.

What’s next

I invite you to read on to hear more about the trip from other team members, including opportunities for you to get involved! ■



“God brought peace and harmony back to the valley”

“uplifting and soul-winning”

Team member reflections...

“God used us”



Steve Collins
Warwick Church,
Warwick, QLD

Prior to the trip, I had several conversations that gave me the sense God had something big planned, though I didn't know what, or how He was going to use us. Well, it was big—huge actually! The team came with a huge heart. They came and served God in ways they did not know they could or would, and were a blessing to all God's children. God used us to help bring husbands back to him, families back together and back to him, and young adults to become Christians. And He used 38 congregations and individuals from across Australia and NZ to make this financially possible, not to forget the enormous prayer support. My reflections: We are part of one body, His body, to use as it pleases him.



David Payne
Heidelberg West Church,
Melbourne, VIC

One of my favourite trips. I love how God brought us to the right place at the right time. Despite some pretty intense issues being worked through at Orouba, God used us to help our brethren facilitate solutions. It was also so good to see people respond to the Word of God being preached. It changes people's lives! Catching up with dear friends like Daniel always lifts my spirit. This year's team was fantastic: I loved seeing the beautiful hearts of my team on display—each person is a Spirit-filled servant of the Most High God. Walking with, loving and encouraging every person they engaged with. This year's walk up the Waria Valley (about 30kms) became a pilgrimage for Christ. So blessed to be part of that journey—cut foot and all.



Rosie Cronin
Otumoetai Church,
Tauranga, NZ

How do you distil such a rich and multi-faceted trip into just a few words? From the amazing, loving people we worked with and had the honour to serve; the incredible remote places we travelled to; the immensely heartbreaking and difficult circumstances we learned some people were going through; the personal challenges to discover our giftings and put them into practice; and even through to the many funny and light-hearted moments that kept us laughing every day, we saw God at work. As He brought new believers to Himself, and as His Word brought healing to brokenness, I was moved by His unifying love, which bound us all together deeply, regardless of all our differences.



Terri-Leigh Redding
The Point Church,
Brisbane, QLD

Papua New Guinea—what a beautiful place. During my time there I was constantly taught reliance, continually shown servitude and ceaselessly observing God's unending grace and love. Over and over I was humbled by the reverence and humility of faith and a willingness to share; an openness so raw and rich with honesty, it could not be mistaken for anything other than our Heavenly Father at work. If love is a result of God in us, then being with our brothers and sisters in Papua New Guinea could only bear witness to Christian and non-Christian alike of the hope within us as followers of Jesus Christ.



Nathan Wilson
The Point Church,
Brisbane, QLD

The melodies sung by the church in PNG were familiar to my ears, for many of them were translated into Pidgin from English. The voices of the saints were a comforting acknowledgement that even though I was in a foreign country, the one God was still present. I was not entering a place full of strangers, but of family whom I had not yet met. God took our mission team to where the soil was good, and over sixteen days we witnessed His kingdom grow. I'm emboldened by the work and faith of all the Christians I met in PNG, and also by the faith of the churches in Australia showing their support for this work. Thank you, brethren, for your servant hands.



Jack Hughes
The Point Church,
Brisbane, QLD

PNG...What an adventure. What a learning experience. It is hard to put into words what the 16 days in PNG were like, but whenever someone asks me about the trip my response is to say, "YOU SHOULD GO!"

There were so many amazing moments, from watching people come forward to give their lives to Christ and at the same time seeing Christians repent and re-join the family to the lighter side of the trip like constantly hitting my head on doorways and anything in sight...

It was an amazing trip and an amazing learning experience. I can't wait to go back.



Damien Bissett
Devonport
Church, TAS

Same planet, different world. We were there with the perfect team: Laughter, love, and a joy to be with. This trip was unique, unforgettable, life-changing, God-given. Where new friendships were born and old ones were strengthened. Where we received much more than we gave. Where joy, hope and love replaced despair and guilt. Where souls were edified and spirits soared with eagles. Tearful reunions, tearful farewells. A rare few (us) at this time in human history had the God-given opportunity to witness and experience all that we did. An incredible honour, an incredible privilege, an incredible blessing. For me, it has become a wonderful addiction. The 2018 PNG mission trip: blessed by God, enriched by Christ.



Arthur Gtatar
Boundary Road
Church, Lae, PNG

Praise the Lord!
Blessed are the feet of those bringing the gospel. It was an uplifting, and soul-winning trip.
This mission trip has strengthened my faith to do more mission work locally. Some of the things that I have learnt from the mission trip were love, patience and team work.
The main purpose of the mission trip was the love for God and people, and of sharing His word in the Waria Valley and Kapini.
The rain in Orouba and flight change at Garasa to Manyama has taught a lesson in being patience.
Team work has made the mission trip successful.



Joe Dobadoba
Boundary Road
Church, Lae, PNG

Before our trip, there was anxiety and thoughts of retaliation among those in the Waria, due to some criminal activity and rumours the police would arrive to arrest those involved. Police in PNG do not respect human rights, so everyone was in fear for their lives and there was much disunity. As the team reached out through teaching and preaching, the tension was lifted, and almost all involved in the law and order issues repented. Had the police arrived first, there would have been chaos in the valley, and retaliation would have made the problem worse. God brought peace and harmony back into the valley through the team's work. Also, a door was opened in Au, to spread the gospel there and beyond. I pray the whole valley may know Truth.



Kamau Dobadoba
Boundary Road
Church, PNG

I thank our heavenly Father for the opportunity to travel with the team into the Waria and Menyama, where I met old friends who had been with us at the Melanesian Bible College. They served us in many ways, reflecting Christ's love for us, and helping me grow spiritually. I hope I have been a blessing to them too. Without this opportunity, I would not have seen and encouraged those we met, and been encouraged by them, too. My challenge now is to visit those in the rural congregations and encourage them to continue in faith and service of our Lord and Master. Thank you to everyone in Australia and New Zealand who supported this mission trip financially and in prayers. We love you all and hope to partner with you in 2020, Lord willing.



Kerri-Anne Dobadoba
Boundary Road
Church, Lae, PNG

It touched my heart seeing how many people came to the church meetings, despite criminal activity, Many repented and some were baptised. Seeing God at work taught me to trust in Him always. I saw our hosts' kind hearts in carrying all our bags and journeying with us, even leaving loved ones behind. Their faith and trust really moved me. Likewise, when I saw my brothers and sisters from Australia and New Zealand walking with us because they love to share the gospel. I thank God for the opportunity to be part of this amazing and spiritually fulfilling trip, both for me and those in Waria and Menyama. I've been blessed and have committed to keep serving Him in future. Thanks to God and to the wonderful group who helped my faith.



Mission Finances: A Rich Blessing

By David Payne



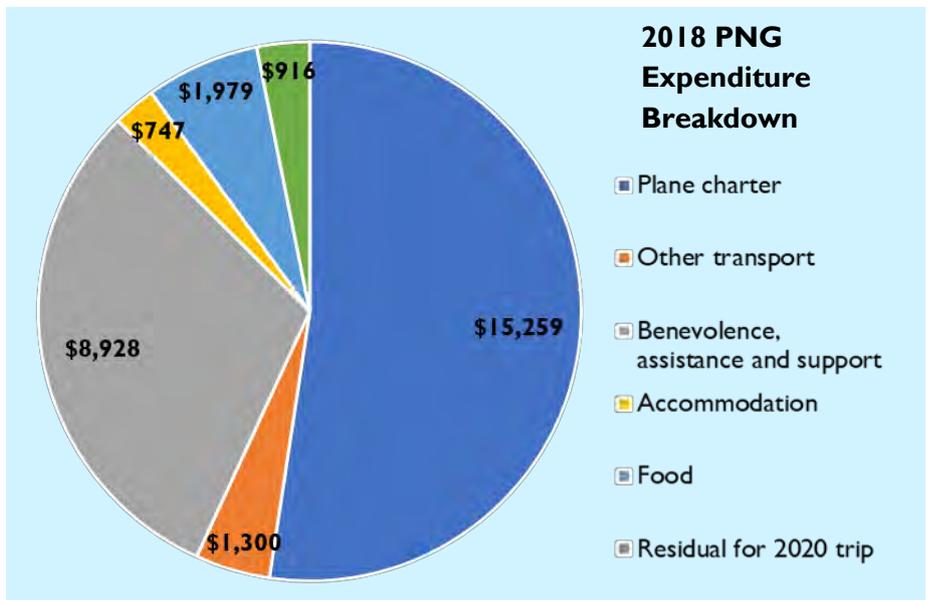
Financially, the 2018 PNG Mission Trip to the Waria Valley and Kapini was the largest to date. The team raised \$28,048 from 37 congregations and individual Christians across Australia! These funds were added to a residual of \$1,119 left over from the 2015 trip; bringing the mission budget to \$29,167.

It is worth noting that each team member from Australia and New Zealand funds their own tickets from Australia or New Zealand to Lae return, their own vaccinations and travel insurance. This requirement sees all the money raised apply to the actual mission trip launched from Lae.

The chart opposite shows the breakdown of costs for the 2018 trip.

Plane Charter [52% of cost]

When taking a mission team into PNG, the largest cost is always the charter of aircraft. Aircraft need to be chartered as there is no vehicle access into the Waria Valley. The aircraft was used to transport both the mission team and cargo into the remote airstrip of Kira



in the Waria Valley. The plane was then needed to lift the team out again after the 35km walk up to the Garasa airstrip. As we charter the aircraft we were able to gift 'back load' seats for 13 sick and infirmed people from the remote villages back to Lae. ►

The church of Christ in Papua New Guinea would like us to convey their deepest thanks and love to all the brethren in Australia that made this trip possible and for the gracious gifts and help provided!



Benevolence, Assistance & Support [31% of cost]

This trip we were able to give \$8,928 to help congregations and individuals in a host of different ways. This money went to the following needs:

- ✓ Solar lighting for church buildings
- ✓ Bibles
- ✓ Song books
- ✓ Five hand operated sewing machines for the congregations
- ✓ Bolts of fabric and cotton for clothing
- ✓ Air lifting a very sick child and his mother for treatment
- ✓ Medical supplies for a very sick evangelist
- ✓ Support for our local translators
- ✓ Sheet metal roofing for the new church building at Asama
- ✓ A push bike for one of the evangelists who has trouble walking long distances
- ✓ Support to several church of Christ youth groups who will be undertaking a five day walk from Lae to Port Moresby in December. This will be the major youth activity for many young Christians in PNG for 2018. ■

How You Can Help

There are a number of ways you can share your resources and help meet the ongoing needs of our brethren in PNG.

1. Set aside some funding now in your congregation's budget for the 2020 trip. If 40 congregations gave \$750 (just \$375 per year) for the next two years, we would raise \$30,000 for the 2020 trip.
2. Read Ruth Zimmerman's report on Agape House (p9) to see if you can help sustain this important mission resource.
3. There is a church building at Asama (Waria Valley) that needs to be rebuilt. This building was severely damaged in a storm. Some of the 2018 funds - 889AUD (PGK2,000) - were used to purchase roofing metal sheets for a new building. However, this project still needs further funding to transport the roofing, chain saws and other building supplies into the valley. If you are interested in helping the Asama brethren build a new building, please contact Steve Collins.



Clockwise from top left: Sewing machines and fabric provide clothing for village Christians and other community members. Youth group from the Boundary Road church of Christ, many of whom will participate in the five day youth walk. Solar lighting brightens up a church gathering. Asama church meets in a makeshift meeting place after their building was destroyed.



Born of water and of the Spirit: 22 Baptised

By Rosie Cronin

Evangelism was an important element of this mission trip, and to see such an immense response to the teaching from God's Word was a great joy!

In all, 22 new Christians were baptised into new life, spanning the Waria Valley and Kapini.

Life in the villages is necessarily connected to the rivers, which provide their physical washing place. Likewise, there was no shortage of crystal clear river water for these spiritual cleansings!

We gifted each new brother and sister with a Pidgin Bible and song book as a gift from the churches in Australia.

The nature of our brief trip means we are not able to share the next steps of each person's new walk of faith. However, we continue to think of them and hope you would join us in praying that they can continue to faithfully follow God, and experience the love and support they need from their church families.

Names of those baptised:

Orouba

- Sam Dopome
- Gulali Khame
- Adonau Nasia
- Gethruth Ulu
- Sohepe Ulu
- Sukame Uma
- Emlyn Gai
- Miling Kala
- Tonia Gobeda
- Samuel Goroa

Aroba

- Malisa Dumuno
- Eli Nelson
- Slina Onno
- Moidale Gopabu

Kapini

- Sushi Paul
- Nasige Paul
- Lena Titus
- Metalin Romen
- Sisilia Jalom
- Hana Peter ■

Motete

- Rita Lamanabi
- Sou Lamanabi





Agape House: A Home Away From Home

By Ruth Zimmerman



Above: The 2018 Australian mission team gathers outside Agape House, and shares a meal around its large dining table during their time in Lae. This provided a base for supplies and preparation before travelling to the Waria Valley and Menyamya.

Since its beginnings in 1979, Agape House has been offering shelter and a home away from home to short- and long-term missionaries seeking to further God's kingdom in PNG. But rising costs are making it increasingly difficult to maintain.

Known to some as "the Missionary Centre", the large wooden building is located on the church property at One Mile in Lae. A large living/dining/lounge space promotes fellowship and a place to gather energy before or after a trip to PNG's more remote destinations.

Each of its eight guest rooms includes furniture, bedding, mosquito nets, and comes with fresh towels daily, and the first two meals for the stay.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Agape House was a home for single missionaries, often hosting up to sixteen residents at a time. In the mid-1990's, as missionary numbers tapered, single, working, female nationals also rented rooms.

In the late 1990s, Canadian Velma Forman converted the house into a guest house for overseas visitors and cared for many teams, couples and singles from Australia, the US, and Canada. Though the responsibility has since changed hands, the goal remains: providing safe, clean, convenient short-term housing for our guests, at a much lower cost than other options in Lae.

Guest numbers vary each year, with most arriving between June and August - the wettest time of the year in Lae! In the time I have been managing Agape House, we have had fifty guests stay with us. Ten were connected to the Melanesian Bible College (MBC), while another thirty-six did outreach or teaching trips to remote areas of PNG.

With the plan to introduce the Sunset International Bible Institute (SIBI) program at MBC in the next couple of years, we anticipate having greater numbers of guests staying with us at Agape House.

We remain deeply grateful for our guests, as they are a great source of encouragement to us and partner with us in promoting God's word in Lae and throughout PNG. We feel blessed to be able to provide Agape House for their use while in Lae, and as a home base while they travel.

The daily rate of \$25/day does not cover the ongoing running costs (electricity, water, maintenance, insurance, land tax, mowing, supplies, etc.) of this facility, and we are grateful for the help we have received from Australian Christians in the past five years for urgent maintenance.

We ask for your prayers as we continue to struggle to meet the costs. Please pray that we are able to continue providing Agape House to our visitors for many years to come.

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If you would like to support the Agape House facility, please contact David Payne in the first instance. ■



Messages of Hope: Teaching and Preaching

By Nathan Wilson

We went to PNG with a simple purpose: To encourage the church and share the gospel of Christ. Teaching and preaching played a prominent role in how we sought to serve, and each day was filled with sermons, testimonials, Bible classes and children's classes.

David Payne blew me away with his gift to preach and teach. He would tell Bible stories and paint grand pictures in our imaginations, drawing our minds and hearts closer to God. Our appeal to those outside the church was to see them be baptised into Christ, so that they may experience their own death, burial and resurrection and be added to God's family. David's sermons often concluded with a call to baptism. 'I want everyone to be very quiet for a moment,' David motioned from the pulpit, 'What do you hear?' Everyone in the building stopped still. The sound of our own hearts beating became louder. After an extended moment David spoke again, 'I hear water!' In that moment our ears became attuned to the sound of the river flowing less than a hundred meters from where we were worshipping.

David continued, 'For those here who believe that Jesus Christ is the son of

God, tonight, before you rest your head on your pillow, you can be baptised! We'll gladly do it for you. Don't delay any longer.' Many hearts were ready for this invitation. A score of people overcrowded the front of the church building, proclaiming their desire to return home. Almost every day we preached the message of the gospel, more people were baptised and added to the church.

The first weekend while we were in Lae, Steve spoke at the Melanesian Bible College to many of the youth, students and anyone else who wished to be present. He shared his gratitude for being in direct fellowship with his brothers and sisters in Christ in PNG once again. 'PNG is my second home,' he said with a warmth inside him. Steve then began stringing sentences together not in English but in Pidgin. It was not fluent Pidgin, but the beauty was that Steve made the effort to speak on the Word to our family in PNG in their own language.

This caught my attention. I very much wanted to be able to do the same. From that point on, hearing Pidgin wasn't to be dismissed as a foreign language, but as a language that needed to be understood and spoken in love, just as Steve was doing.



Terri-Leigh prepares a children's class.

While speaking, Steve implored us to love the Lord our God and likewise to love one another.

Although I was not present to experience their teaching, Terri-Leigh Redding, Rosie Cronin, Kamau Dobadoba and Kerry-Anne Dobadoba lead many of the women and children in classes and devotionals. Often I'd hear Rosie and Terri-leigh leading children in songs and teaching the joy of praise. They taught children lessons on the fruit of the Spirit and how by being planted in God we grow good fruit. They spoke to the young women about pursuing godly relationships and Kamau spoke on marriage.

Steve, Joe, David and Arthur would lead men's classes challenging us all to be examples to the community and to our families. We discussed how as men we ought to be showing strength in our humility before God.

Jack Hughes gave a testimony on his decision to start following Jesus. He reflected on the beauties of nature and how only the one true God of the universe could create something so magnificent.

Joe Dobadoba and Arthur Gtara served as faithful translators ►



Listeners in Orouba come forward in repentance in response to a sermon.



whenever any of us were speaking. Joe, who is an excellent preacher, would always translate for me whenever I was given the opportunity to speak on the Word. In Orouba, the first village we stayed at in the Waria Valley, I spoke on choosing prayer over the temptation to worry; for when we worry it means we are putting our faith in something other than God. This experience of preaching in the Waria Valley was nothing short of life-changing. I've never seen so many people act with such immediacy after hearing the Word of God. It has opened my eyes to how powerful God's Word is to those who have ears to hear it. The stories about Jesus and the words that he spoke can truly change lives in a moment.

In all the preaching and teaching we conducted, our team never neglected to bring our thoughts and plans to God in prayer. Any time we were together was an opportunity to share what we'd seen that day and pray. We'd especially pray for those teaching, that the Spirit would speak through them and prepare the hearts of those listening. We'd ask that we may be sensitive to the needs of the saints in each place we went, always prepared to change course for the sake of God's better purposes. ■



All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

From the top: Steve at Boundary Road; Joe at Orouba; Rosie at Orouba; David and Wes at Tent City, Arthur at MBC; Nathan at Aroba.



Fellow Workers in the Field

By Rosie Cronin

The deep and lasting relationships that have formed between members of the churches in Australia and PNG are the result of sustained commitment on all sides, allowing God’s love to flourish. We recognise that without the help and hospitality of the Christians we visited, such a trip would be near impossible. We also recognise the faithful service many of our brothers and sisters continue to give to the work of the Lord, and we wish to name but a few here.

Wesley and Tupolin Wosse



Wes and Tupo were to accompany us on our trip to the Waria and Menyamya, but due to illness could not. Wes runs the Boundary Road youth group and is organising a five day walk for members of his group to attend a nation-wide church event in Port Moresby.

Ruth Zimmerman



A Canadian national, and missionary to PNG for 26 years. Ruth’s assistance in logistics, cultural awareness and other

aspects of organising the 2018 trip was immense! We are so grateful.

Daniel and Sally



A leader in the church in Orouba, Daniel kept us well-connected to the community. Sally and others served us with food preparation and hospitality.

Hopaia and Iama



These two offer the gold standard of hospitality, welcoming us to stay in a newly-constructed house in Aroba and attending to every need throughout our visit. Hopaia’s leadership in the church and community helped the visiting men speak into some needs of the church.

Roken and Sowa



Pictured: Roken

Roken served together with us at the church in Aroba. His recent visit to Au developed an opportunity for us to preach at this village, which has only one family from the church. All while his wife Sowa cared for their newly adopted child.

Benjamin, Nick, Sumugau



Pictured: Benjamin

These young evangelists from Orouba are among those who share a heart to continue growing the church in the valley. We have faith they will foster the new Christians within that region.

Sephron and Albina



Our hosts in Kapini opened a new door for us and provided for us both physically, and also by connecting us with the spiritual needs of Christians in the area.

And many more...

There are many more who served us, walked with us, carried our belongings, welcomed us with outstretched arms and smiling faces—likely more than we even know. We are grateful for each member playing their role to make the trip a success! ■



Papua New Guinea: Land of the Unexpected

By Damien Bissett

Papua New Guinea • Same planet, different world. Unpredictable, confronting, demanding, challenging. A place that wrenches you out of your comfort zone.

Papua New Guinea • Exciting, enriching, exhilarating. A place of sensory overload. A place of beautiful people.

Lae • East coast city. PNG's second largest. Busy, chaotic, dangerous in parts. Hot, rainy. Pot-holed roads, no visible road rules (fun). Some wealth, much poverty. Shanty towns, markets, roadside stalls, mothers washing children in roadside puddles.

Agape House • Our sanctuary. Safe, peaceful, homely. Much laughter, much love. Uplifting visits from many brethren.

The Highlands • Small planes, grass airstrips, skilled pilots, prayer. Exhilarating. Breathtaking scenery, mountains, thick jungle, raging rivers. Hot, humid, rainy. Mountain tracks, no roads, mud, slippery, river crossings. Some short hikes, some long—several hours. Demanding at times, but incredibly uplifting.

A conga line of people. Us few 'white skins', many villagers. Helping us, guiding us, carrying our gear. Small women carrying heavy packs. Incredible stamina, incredible strength. Us wearing shoes, they bare-footed, often hand-in-hand. Much laughter, joy, bonding.

Unforgettable welcomes. Magnificent floral entrances and displays. Much singing. Some cultural welcomes. New bamboo homes built for us.

Village Life • Simple, basic, slow. No vehicles, no technology, no bills, no complications. Bliss. Has great appeal. Pigs, dogs, chooks roaming freely in harmony. Children and toddlers with bush knives, machetes. Just normal village life. Toilets—a hole in the ground. 'Was was'—bathing in rivers. For us: mosquito nets up, mosquito nets down. Move on.

The Villagers • Incredible hospitality, incredible love. Some English, more Pidgin. Humble, gentle, servant hearts.

And me • An ever-increasing passion and love for PNG and its people. ■

