



FIONA's NEWS December 2024



“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2 vv10-11 (NIV)

Forty years ago, MAF flew Michael Buerk to the camp from which he gave his report that alerted the world to the 1984 famine in Ethiopia. That in turn led to the Band Aid song “Do they know it’s Christmas?” Being a Christian-majority country, the answer to that, of course, is “Yes”!

Here are some of the familiar aspects of the Christmas story but with a MAF link.



A census doesn’t happen very often so the last quinquennial one by the Australian Bureau of Statistics was back in 2021. They needed help from MAF to access remote communities in Arnhem Land, both with the delivery/collection of census forms and with transport of ABS staff. The census is important for funding decisions and the provision of support services for each community area. *(Photo: Kim Job)*

Whilst not recorded in the Biblical accounts, Mary is generally pictured being carried to Bethlehem on a donkey. These are important animals in a number of countries where we serve. Veterinarians with a Mission Program conduct regular outreach in Kenya. This picture is actually from 2023 when they were among the animals treated by a team of 20 from VMP that MAF flew for a 5-day visit to Enairebuk. Each day started with sharing the word of God with around 300 Maasai tribesmen. *(Photo: Tricia Matheson)*



Many of MAF’s flights are in connection with maternal healthcare, whether that’s taking medical supplies to hospitals, flying a visiting team to train midwives or conducting an emergency flight for a mother suffering complications before or after the birth of her child. MAF Technologies in Papua New Guinea also play an important role in enabling women in remote communities to have a safe delivery, when provision of light can make a difference between life and death. When

they were asked to investigate the failure of the power supply at Telfomin hospital, they were told that midwives were delivering babies by the light of phone torches – held by mouth if there is no colleague available to help hold it. Technician Nason was able to do a temporary fix which means that future night-time deliveries will now be with normal lighting but a permanent solution for consistent power will require new solar panels at the hospital. *(Photo above in Telfomin, Kowara Bell. Right, in Mougulu, Joy Suarkia)*



The first people to hear the good news of Jesus’ birth were the shepherds on the hillside above Bethlehem. Some years ago, before I joined MAF, I visited Lesotho a couple of times with the Durham-Lesotho Link – and met some of the MAF US staff who fly there. Lesotho is a small, mountainous kingdom land-locked by South Africa. Unusually, the education level of girls is higher than that of boys. This is because girls can be in school whilst the boys (from as young as 5) are up in the hills, camping out away from home, looking

after the family's sheep. Today, one of MAF's partnerships is with Lesotho Flying Pastors, taking them to share the gospel and provide discipleship in places such as Matsaile. This is a small village in eastern Lesotho which is not accessible by road – but has an airstrip. From there, it's a hike of several hours to other villages with no access other than by foot. Without these dedicated pastors, the shepherds and others in these remote communities would never even hear the name of Jesus. (Photos: Lem Malabuyo - team meeting 2 (blanketed) shepherds on the trail. Lesotho Flying Pastor team – arriving at Matsaile)



Occasionally we count royalty amongst our passengers as, for example, when Princess Anne visited some Save the Children projects in Uganda in 2022. (Photo at Masika Airstrip, Dave Forney)

More often we are involved with flights in support of education, which should increase the number of “wise men” for the future. In Liberia, it can take a week to drive from the capital, Monrovia, to Harper in the far south east of the country yet the journey by air is not much more than an hour. MAF flights are therefore crucial in

supporting the work of Street Child Liberia. They are building schools in rural communities and sponsoring and supporting volunteer teachers to work in the schools, as well as providing school materials to the students. They are also helping parents with business grants so that they can support their children through school. In one village, they called Street Child “the light that gives life”. (Photo: Street Child Media Team)



The threat of Herod caused the Holy Family to seek refuge in Egypt. Much of our work in Uganda, Chad and South Sudan is in support of refugees or internally displaced people who have fled their homes because of fighting. Just before this Chadian aircraft was due to go for month-long maintenance, last minute bookings were fitted in for Action Against Hunger to take supplies to refugee camps near Goz Beida and Adré. (Photo: Annelie Edsmyr)

Thank you for your support for me over the last year. May God **ble**ss you this Christmas, as you celebrate the birth of our Saviour, **keep** you throughout the coming year, lift up the face of His countenance upon you and give you **peace**.

- Thank God for all the flights that MAF undertakes that enable people in isolated communities to hear the good news of Jesus and to have access to medical care, education and food.
- Please pray for those whose Christmas this year will not be peaceful or joyful because of the fear of conflict, hunger or sickness. Pray for the various churches, mission agencies and humanitarian organisations working to meet the needs of affected individuals and families.
- Please pray for me as I continue to adjust to working part-time from home instead of full-time in an office surrounded by staff and as I start trying to find my place in this area with involvement in local activities, church or otherwise. As ever, please continue to pray for my physical and spiritual health.

Please let me or MAF know if you no longer want to receive this prayer letter or would like it in a different format (post or email) and let us know if you would also like to receive the briefer prayer letter without pictures that I send in the interim months.

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