



FIONA's NEWS
Marh 2026



Jesus said "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12v50 (NIV)

As this letter is being issued on Mothering Sunday, I thought this time the focus could be on mothers.

During my brief stay in Mt Hagen this month, I was based at the MAF compound near the airport so I was very grateful to the couple here who lent me their vehicle both Sundays. It meant I could drive into town to attend the service at St Michael's Anglican church – my parish church for the four years that I lived here. It was such a delight to have hugs from old friends and to listen to Father George's sermons. As 8th March was International Women's Day he had also asked 3 members of the Mothers' Union – the past president and a former civil servant, a nurse and a teacher - to say a bit about their work and the challenges of work and bringing up a family. There was a very moving response from one of the older men saying that we should thank mothers for what they do and the influence they have on us. He had not helped his mother (who died when he was 9) and he said men beat women and swear at them and accuse them of sorcery, when they should be helping them and thanking them.



65% of the women in prison in Papua New Guinea have been convicted of violence against a fellow



wife in a polygamous marriage, with others being the victims of domestic abuse who have retaliated against their husbands. Prior to Mt Hagen, I had a week in Goroka where I was pleased to be invited to a meal with the Symmonds family. Andy is one of our pilots and Helen is on her church prison ministry team that visits the women held in Buete jail, pictured here. The team take in Bibles and necessities and lead Bible study classes. Megdela, one of the prisoners, has shared how God's word is transforming their lives, setting them free even

in prison. You can see/hear more of this if you can access the link to the attached mpv file. (Photo: Helen Symmonds)

Also in Goroka, I had the pleasure of being invited to a meal with the Watson family. Glenys is our current longest-serving female pilot and has recently taken on the role of Flight Operations Manager in PNG, making her responsible for the oversight of the other pilots in that programme. Her husband, Jonny, has some involvement with airstrip development and maintenance, as well as helping to keep home for 4 teenage daughters. You may recall when I shared a story of Glenys doing an emergency medical flight for an expectant mother who had been in labour for two days but who then gave birth to a baby whilst in the air. (Photo Brad Venter)





In Mt Hagen, I was hosted a couple of times by Andy (Maintenance Controller) and Sharon Campbell. Before marriage, Sharon was a doctor at Rumginae hospital in the Western Province. It was she who saved the life of a previous finance manager, Geoff, when he fortuitously had a heart attack while staying close to that hospital which was appropriately equipped to deal with the initial emergency. Sharon still spends time volunteering at different hospitals, covering for absences or mentoring new doctors, but she also holds informal surgeries for MAF staff. At the moment, that includes monitoring and providing antenatal care to a number of national and expat staff/wives who are expecting babies.

In Tanzania, Pilot Becki has herself recently given birth to a baby daughter. Last autumn, however, she flew staff from Same hospital and Maternity Africa to Lesirwai to conduct maternal health screening and vaccinations and raise awareness of fistula and the opportunities for treatment of it. It's a day's walk from the village to Same hospital so the women are very grateful that the clinic comes to them on a monthly basis. Even so Safi, with her two young children and pregnant with her third, had walked for 3 hours to attend the clinic where she was also given a Ki-Maasai Bible *(Photo: Päivi Griffin)*



In many of the countries where MAF serves, life is particularly challenging for those mothers who have disabled children, both because of stigma and because of the financial impact. I have written before about MAF South Sudan's partnership with the CURE hospital in Uganda to help children with hydrocephalus and spina bifida. Since December 2023 more than 80 babies and children have been flown to Soroti for treatment. One of the return flights last year brought a CURE team to Juba for a follow up clinic in conjunction with OVCILa Nostra Famiglia. They checked head growth, dispensed medicine and conducted physiotherapy sessions with the main focus being to train the mothers so that they can continue the therapy at home – even if, as for young Juahir, that home is in a refugee camp. *(Photo: Jenny Davies)*

The trip to PNG was very worthwhile, with the external audits of both MAF Technologies and MAF PNG going smoothly. I also had a productive meeting with the Internal Revenue Commission. The first phase of their tax audit is complete. The next phase is the sampling stage - meaning that I now have some work to do to substantiate the classification of certain entries in the accounts, whilst also working with the MAFI auditors in Ashford on the group financial statements. Mother and I were able to keep in touch reasonably well whilst I was away, but it is good to be back to help around the house again.

- Thank God for prison ministry teams and pray for the women in Buete jail.
- Pray for the health of mothers and their children in MAF and for all those involved in providing maternal healthcare in remote communities
- Please pray for the finance team as we deal with audits, budgets and integration matters.
- I am rather tired with the extra hours worked whilst away and the long journey home so please pray for a quick recovery of energy levels.

Please let me or MAF know if you no longer want to receive this quarterly 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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