

# Symmonds' Soundbites

## News from Papua New Guinea



We hope this finds you well.

It's hard to believe that we are rapidly approaching the 4th quarter of 2024. The year is flying by. It has been a very busy 'summer'. (Technically it's been winter here, but most of our readers are northern hemisphere, and we still think in those terms. There is very little change in the weather here anyway!)

We hope this latest letter will give a flavour of what has been going on in the last few months...

### **MAF Ministry Highlights**

#### **Taking Delegates to Church Conference**

There are many different denominations of church in PNG. Historically, pioneer missionaries established churches in remote villages, and in many cases these rural churches are now being led by national pastors. One of the things we have the privilege of doing is flying pastors and delegates to training and teaching conferences. It is so important for these remote churches to stay connected to the wider fellowship and sound teaching.

Back in June, Andy flew a plane load of delegates from Wanikipa, in the Lagaiap valley, to Wabag in Enga province, for a conference of the Lutheran Church of PNG. This was one of a number of flights bringing people from many locations.

The focus of this conference was reconciliation. Sadly, as sometimes happens, worldly influences had caused splits and factions to develop in this church. This is sometimes exacerbated in PNG culture by tribal rivalries, but praise God that this conference has brought about restored fellowship and a renewed focus on the most important thing - the good news of the forgiveness of sin offered by Jesus!



*Conference delegates boarded and about to depart Wanikipa.*

## **Medical Evacuations**

Medevacs are a critical part of the work of MAF in PNG. The remoteness of communities, ruggedness of the terrain and lack of infrastructure mean many people have little or no access to healthcare. When a call comes in from a remote village MAF will endeavour to respond. Sometimes the need is for a non-urgent medical transfer, where the clinic or community have exhausted their knowledge or resources and a patient needs to go to town for more specialist care, but the requirement is not hugely urgent.

However, there are occasions where the response is time critical and literally a matter of life and death. In the last few weeks Andy has been involved in a number of such urgent medevacs. Patients/casualties have included haemorrhage from traumatic labour, serious facial injury from fight involving bush knives, major leg injury from domestic violence, spinal injury from falling tree bough and accidental finger amputation of a girl playing too close to people working with bush knives.

The outcome of these medevacs has varied in success. The most recent was the lady who needed to be flown from Balimo to the hospital on Daru island. Sadly, the baby was still born, but we were able to get the mother to hospital where we left her in the care of doctors. We have not yet heard what happened, so we pray they were able to save her life.



*Carefully loading the medevac patient with the wounded leg into the aircraft, ready for transfer to hospital.*

## Enabling Bible Teaching and Church Support

In July we assisted teams from Pioneer Bible Translators to get to Samban, a village situated in the vast swamps of East Sepik province. These teams were working with the local church, teaching and discipling the congregation and supporting the local pastors.

*Pioneer Bible Translators team arriving at Samban.*



## Pastoral Visit

We were hugely blessed at the beginning of August to have a visit from friends from Cornerstone, our church in Nottingham. The mission coordinators team arranged for the Radcliffe family, Rob, Ruth, Rebekah and Timothy, to come and stay with us for nine days. We visited with local friends, explored the area, experienced local culture and hopefully showed some aspects of the work of MAF. Ruth and Rebekah accompanied Helen to the hospital and women's prison. The visit was big boost to us. We trust that the Radcliffes enjoyed it too, and can now better contextualise our news updates and relate that back to the fellowship at Cornerstone.



*Symmonds and Radcliffes at a waterfall just outside Goroka. Misek and Vegu, two of our MAF Goroka base staff, were our guides for this little bush adventure!*

They even got to experience being 'Air Niuginied' - last minute cancellation of their departure flight meant an extra night in Goroka, and one less in Singapore - sori tru!

## Hospital and Women's Prison Ministry

Helen continues to be engaged in these important ministries. On Wednesdays she goes to the prison, with a dedicated group of ladies from our church. Mama Pricilla generally organises these visits, but all the ladies share words and lessons from the bible, bringing hope and encouragement to the prisoners, the prospects of whom may otherwise be very bleak. We know that there is no wrongdoing beyond the forgiveness of Jesus and we can have deep hope in the promise of salvation. In PNG it is not uncommon for women to be incarcerated for the crimes of husbands, or because of eventual retaliation after years of domestic abuse. Please pray these women will not lose hope, but hold on to the ultimate justice that Jesus promises. In May, Helen was able to distribute packs from charity Days for Girls. This charity provides

materials for menstrual sanitation in areas where it is not generally available. In the prison, sanitation is very basic and the women are unable to afford or access menstrual products. Helen and the ladies from church were able to spend time sharing how we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made' and precious in God's sight. They then gave instruction on how to use and care for their reusable packs. It was a privilege to witness the women open their packs and see their look of delight and wonder.

Thursday is Mama Care day. This ministry provides practical and spiritual support for new mothers on the premature baby ward at the local hospital. Care packages are provided weekly, as well as hot drinks, snacks and prayer. The mothers very much appreciate these visits. When Helen has crossed paths with some of them around town, after discharge from the ward, there have been warm greetings and expressions of thanks.

Please pray especially for baby Emmanuel, who was born with encephalocele, a rare condition where the brain is not fully contained within the skull. He was not expected to survive, but he has, and miraculously his condition is improving. He was due to have an operation today (10th Sep). Please lift him up in prayer. The doctors are already calling him a miracle baby.



*Left: Distributing 'Days for Girls' packs at the women's prison Right: Baby Emmanuel with mum Wendy*

## **MAF Women's Conference**

This last weekend, 6th - 8th September, Helen went to Mt Hagen to join with all women MAF staff members, expat and national, at a conference titled 'Serving Sisters Standing Together'. There was worship, fellowship and teaching sessions on the theme of unity. It was a great time to deepen relationships,

particularly between people who live in different parts of the country and rarely have opportunity to meet face to face. Helen especially loved being able to 'stori', drink coffee and share good food! The worship continued until on the plane ready for the flight back to Goroka on Monday morning.

## Goodbye to Good Friends

Comings and goings are part of life on the mission field. Within the last year we have said goodbye to a number of families who have become good friends during our time in PNG. We are especially sad to have farewelled our close neighbours, the Knigge family (Wilfred, Harriette, Micha and Ruben), with whom we shared our time in Wewak, the Neufelds (Tim, Laura, Hannah and Ethan), friends from the Goroka compound and the Schadegg family (Lukas, Mahaela, Jael, Timon and Benaja), who worked with MAF Tech (CRMF) for 10years. These families have returned to the Netherlands, Canada and Switzerland respectively. Although Wilfred and Tim are still working with MAF, we will miss them all greatly here.



*Left: Harriette, Micha and Ruben visited for the final time. Right: Neufeld family after Tim's last flight in PNG*

## Let's hear it for the Boys!

We all enjoyed a well needed holiday in Cairns at the start of June. The boys are now old enough to enjoy some slightly more adventurous activities such as tubing down a river and an escape room. They then had a good 'summer' on the compound and local Goroka area, playing with friends. Sadly, as mentioned above, the last few months have seen the departure from MAF PNG of a number of close friends. We are thankful that friendships at school are growing. The new school year at Numonhoi Christian Academy started in early August. Joel and Daniel have settled well into the the routines and adjusted to the changes associated with being in the next grade. Joel is now in junior high.



*Joel and Daniel preparing for go-karting in Cairns, not robbing a bank!*

Thank you once again for your interest in the work of MAF in Papua New Guinea. We very much appreciate your support and prayers.

As always, if you have time to get in touch personally, please drop us an email. Love from

Andy, Helen, Joel and Daniel

## **Please Pray:**

### **Give Thanks**

- For the work MAF is able to do helping and supporting remote communities.
- For the ministries Helen is involved with at hospital and prison.
- For the Radcliffe family's visit.
- That baby Emmanuel is surviving.

### **Pray For**

- Our continued health and well-being.
- The families leaving PNG and the loss of friendships.
- Prison and Mama Care ministries.
- Baby Emmanuel.
- A new Country Director for MAF PNG. Pray the right person will soon be appointed to this critical role.
- MAF PNG's ministry to continue to have lasting Kingdom impact.