

MELANESIA NEWS



ABIDE WITH ME

PRAYER, PEOPLE, GIVING



ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Announcement of AGM

Letter from the Archbishop of Melanesia

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Abide with me,
fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens;
Lord, with me abide.

The famous hymn, by Henry Lyte, a Vicar of Brixham in Devon, was not written chiefly as an evening hymn. Composed on his last Sunday as Vicar, at a time of mortal sickness for him and trouble with some church members, the author faced his own death – the eventide of his life. Based on the walk of two disciples with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, this is a hymn about faith: the faith that looks at death without fear and triumphs over it through Christ.

I write this in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. The threat and reality of death to many who are vulnerable and elderly has changed our way of life. Here in the UK, the Government has urged people to stay at home and make no unnecessary travel. Schools are still closed and all public events and gatherings are cancelled or postponed. For the first year since World War II, we will not hear 'Abide with me' sung in May at the FA Cup Final.

As with other mission agencies, proposed plans and events have changed for MMUK. With the Lambeth Conference postponed until 2021 and the knock-on effect of the Melanesian Bishops and their spouses no

longer visiting the UK this summer, our hospitality programme and our climate conference at St Martin-in-the-Fields have had to be cancelled. We will, however, have the opportunity to offer that hospitality to our brothers and sisters next year!

The MMUK AGM this year is now being moved to an online gathering at 7pm on Monday 21st September and I hope many of you will join us that evening.

Archbishop Leonard has written assuring us of ACoM's prayers for us here in the UK. We are grateful for their support and for the reality of Christ's loving family reaching across the world. Mandy and I have particular reason to be thankful for their care and kindness as the Melanesian Brothers and Novices welcomed and





Destruction of Cyclone Harold

embraced our son, Samuel, on a placement at Tabalia and Chester Rest House, Honiara during this difficult time. Although the virus has not been discovered in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, people there are still affected hugely by this pandemic. The number of cargo ships bringing supplies to the islands has reduced severely and, for a people more reliant today on imported food and medicines, due to climate change, this is a concern.

As you will know, the islands have recently been badly affected by Tropical Cyclone Harold. There has been destruction of crops, homes, livelihoods and lives. MMUK immediately released extra funds (in the budget for Lambeth Hospitality this year) to help provide relief for ACoM. We have also set up an **Emergency Appeal** (see website www.mmuk.net) to help with basic needs of families, with rebuilding following the Cyclone and, also, for helping ACoM to weather the economic storm of the coronavirus. I am grateful to those of you

who have already responded so generously to this appeal. We are fortunate to be blessed with such a worldwide family, to be able to receive and give gifts of prayer and practical love.

What has helped me more than anything through this challenging period is the promise that Jesus gave to his disciples: 'I am with you always, even to the end of time.' We are not alone. God abides with us -you and me- and walks with us through whatever we face, even in the valley of the shadow of death. Henry Lyte discovered the truth of this. And so, for us, 'Abide with me' can also be a personal prayer:

**Who like thyself my guide
and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine,
Lord, abide with me.**

+Mark Rylands, Chair of MMUK

ARCHBISHOP'S ADDRESS

The Most Revd Leonard Dawea – Archbishop of Melanesia

Alleluia the Lord is risen; He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

It is indeed a privilege and honour to be given space to meet you all on paper. As the recently installed leader and 7th Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, I am obliged to maintain our relationships with you all. Grounded in the Spirit of Christ Jesus, the relationships continually remind us of our shared missions, both in the past and current. And as we celebrate the life of Christ each resurrection tide, we anticipate newness and deeper commitment to those relationships. We are, therefore glad to say that we are co-partners of Christ's mission; taking to heart the multi-faceted issues of international and domestic concerns around us.

Out there too are numerous others who are part of us through other means of relationship. There is, in a wider context, our relationships with the rest of the Anglican Communion family. As members of this great family, sealed by the Body and Blood of Christ, we hold each other at heart through our prayers and mutual support. As members of this great family of Christ, we share each other's contextual socio-economic, political, religious and environmental issues together.

At the Primates' meeting in Jordan in January, a lot of priority issues were discussed and heard from around the Communion. These issues have great impact and pressure on our Christianity. This makes Christian ministry a challenging, difficult and sometimes unbearable. Though, COVID-19 was already taking infancy steps then, it did not yet command global attention; therefore, was never mentioned during the Primates' meeting.

On my return from the Primates' meeting, there were already people wearing face masks in the international terminals. I realised then

that it was a preventive mechanism, but I was not aware of any health hazard then. Two days after arriving home in the Solomon Islands, I read a news article of the coronavirus, which made me recall the face masks in the terminals. I realised also how I escaped in what can be termed as a "blinking of an eye".

At first, it seemed as something of Wuhan or from distant lands. There was entire complacency that it will never come near us, let alone grip the globe in captivity. But now its impact is right in the face; it has engrossed the world into stillness. It will go down in history as the worst health hazard of the millennium; infecting more than 2 million and claimed more than 200,000 lives across the globe. It forced the cancellation and deferment of international programs of all walks of life. In our Anglican Communion family, the 2020 Lambeth Conference was deferred to summer 2021.

As I write Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are among the very few countries in the world still COVID-19 free. But nobody can be certain for how much longer this will be. On the western border of Solomon Islands, there are already confirmed cases too close in Bougainville.

Despite that, the social, economic and religious impacts are already impacting heavily on our countries. There have been lockdowns and curfews in the recent weeks in both countries. Mass movement of people to the rural areas is current in Solomon Islands following a call by the national government to reduce population density in Honiara. Both countries have announced the likely downturn in our economy as most economic activities have scaled down. While it is the case now in global economy, it will be more severe on developing countries like ours.

As we focused on health measures, our two countries were badly hit by Tropical Cyclone Harold. It claimed some dear lives and caused serious damage to homes, properties and food gardens, especially in Guadalcanal and Makira. In Solomon Islands twenty-seven people, including women and children were washed overboard by high sea gusts from a passenger boat from Honiara to Malaita in the early hours of 3rd April. All were declared dead; only six bodies were recovered and given reverential burial, the rest were never recovered.

Tropical Cyclone Harold entered Vanuatu and other Pacific countries at the increased strength of a Category 5 storm on 6th April. It caused severe damages in Vanuatu, leaving about five thousand people homeless. It destroyed a lot of Church properties in Vanuatu; the DOVNC Bishop's official residence, the Office building, Church buildings, staff houses and other properties. They are gradually recovering from the aftermath of the cyclone while strictly adhering to COVID-19 health standards and measures. Tropical Cyclone Harold is an obvious testament to the ever-changing weather patterns resulting from the increasing climate change issues in our island nations.

These situations indeed jeopardise our livelihood, social harmony, religious life and welfare. But during all these disturbing stories and situations across the globe and Anglican Communion family, we remain faithful and resilient as a global Christian family. We hold the local issues of our local territories globally. As a huge spiritual family, we stand on our grounded faith to reach out in love and support, even those in most difficult times and circumstances. We do this remembering that the broken Body of Christ unites us across various degrees of nationalities.

These issues give deeper and tangible meaning to our relationships, expressed through reciprocal spiritual, social, physical and technical support. They manifest in

greater volume the testaments of the unceasing embrace of Jesus we offer each other, even in times of lockdown, geographical isolation, physical distancing, and in all situations, we find ourselves in.

As is always the case in times of disaster, we are receiving support of prayers and donations from our mission partners. We are as ever grateful to MMUK, for launching an emergency appeal towards this worthy course. And in like manner, we acknowledge those who have wholeheartedly supported the appeal.

The Anglican Church of Melanesia started off 2020 brightly with the consecration of the new Bishop of Diocese of Temotu, the Rt Rev. Willie Tungale in February. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adjust our programs. The General Synod is now deferred to 2021 and dioceses are asked to defer the synods accordingly. The bi-annual provincial meetings have been trimmed down to just one, which will happen in August, though depending on the COVID-19.

Two of our long serving diocesan bishops will retire this year. Bishop Alfred Karibongi of Hanuato'o will retire in June. And Bishop Nathan Tome of the Diocese of Guadalcanal will retire in September. Elections and consecrations of their successors will follow consecutively thereafter. The two Bishops will leave with a great wealth of wisdom and experience. The Council of Bishops and the whole Church will surely miss them both. Please join us to pray for them. We wish them and their families great blessings on their retirement.

May the Spirit of the resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ be with you all. Love, Joy and Peace.

The Most Revd Leonard Dawea – Archbishop of Melanesia and Bishop of the Diocese of Central Melanesia



EMERGENCY APPEAL FROM MMUK

Cyclone Harold caused widespread destruction in the Pacific in early April 2020. Over 25 people lost their lives in the Solomon Islands washed overboard from a ferry, and villages and the religious orders lost buildings and had their growing areas destroyed.

When the storm moved towards Vanuatu it intensified. The Rt Revd James Tama, Bishop of Vanuatu and New Caledonia, shared his despair when he said: 'With our country facing the second Category 5 Cyclone within the space of five years, I come to you with both a heavy heart and open hands.'

The Diocese of Vanuatu and New Caledonia based on the island of Santo, had buildings and the recently restored cathedral badly damaged, all its diocesan records were lost and the Bishop and his family lost their home and all their possessions.

Immediately after the storm, the Anglican Church of Melanesia activated its Emergency Centres to assess the damage and needs

of communities, particularly those in isolated locations. Teams of volunteers and church workers also travelled to villages to offer spiritual guidance and run COVID-19 awareness training.

MMUK has sent emergency funds to support this work and launched a UK appeal. By the end of April £16,000 was donated by UK supporters. The charity will run this appeal during the summer, as the region continues to rebuild, whilst at the same time dealing with the economic impact of COVID-19, with less imports and tourism, and also trying to prevent cases of COVID-19.

Please pray for the communities dealing with loss and if you can, donate to the 'MMUK Emergency Appeal'.

Updates on our appeal can be found via Facebook and Twitter.

Many thanks for your support.

There are a number of ways to give to this appeal:

BANK TRANSFER: Contact MMUK for bank details on (01404) 851656 or mission@mmuk.net

BY CHEQUE: Payable to The Melanesian Mission.
Post to: The Melanesian Mission, 21 The Burlands, Feniton, Honiton, EX14 3UN

ONLINE:



facebook Donate



'The story of the resurrection of our Lord is a story of renewal, transformation of life, new light and a journey of faith for nations, communities, families and individuals.

'We pray that it will be the story of Melanesia, as we continue to live with the fear of COVID-19 and the aftermath of Cyclone Harold.

'We pray that the new light of Christ's resurrection will renew and transform those fears and take us on a new journey of life.'

Most Revd Leonard Dawea, Archbishop of Melanesia



2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Melanesian Mission will be held at 7pm on Monday 21st September.

This year we will be meeting virtually (online). Further details, including the instructions of

how you can join us will be posted on the charity's website in due course.

This meeting replaces the cancelled AGM which was arranged for 18th July at St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London.

NEWS IN BRIEF



The new Principal of Selwyn College is Revd Davidson Nwaeramo, who was formally the Dean of St Barnabas Cathedral.

Bishop Terry Brown is writing the fifty-year history of the Community of the Sisters of the Church in the Solomon Islands (1970-2020).

If you have anecdotes, stories or photos you would be willing to share with him, please email him at: terrymalaita@yahoo.com or contact MMUK to pass on your memories.

Can you Gift Aid your donations to MMUK and increase their value by 25%?

Please contact the charity to complete a Gift Aid Form.

Following the bush fires in Australia, the Anglican Church of Melanesia coordinated fundraising events and collections across all its dioceses to raise funds for the relief efforts.



Guadalcanal was hit by flooding again in January and February, resulting in Selwyn College being evacuated and closed twice. MMUK sent emergency funds and donations to help the College pump out and clean the pupils' washrooms and dormitories.

On Tuesday evenings, the Novitiate at TNK visit families living in the plantation. They lead Evening Prayer and hold Bible Studies. In February, 14 children from the plantation and one from the Christian Care Centre were baptised. Please help the Community to continue this work by buying Melanesian Prayer Books for these families. They cost SD\$90 just over £8.00.

Contact MMUK if you would like to buy a family a prayer book.

In March Brother Worrick Marako was elected as the Minister Provincial of the Society of St Francis in the Solomon Islands.

Many thanks to St Andrew's Ham, helping the Community of the Sisters of the Church to buy a replacement generator. Revd Sr Veronica says:

"This is the picture of the new generator that St Andrew's helped to fund. Thank you very much for your generous support."



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A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

Last year MMUK Trustee Daphne Jordan and Revd Canon Cate Edmonds continued the Christian Distinctiveness Training in ACoM Schools and meet friends both in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

After a long journey it was great to be greeted by Father Rayner in Port Vila. After settling into our hotel, we were visited by Karen Bell the new High Commissioner for Vanuatu. Karen explained that there had not been a HC in Vanuatu for fourteen years. It was interesting to note that following Brexit the British Government were setting up fourteen new High Commissions in the South Pacific, the West Indies and in Africa. Karen explained that she had three main roles: Working with the Government on issues of democracy, World relations and especially trade with Britain, and Climate Change. We introduced her to the work of

MMUK and the schools links programme as well as promoting the Article One project. Karen recognised that the three important and leading groups in Vanuatu life: The Government, the Chiefs and the Church.

The next day we departed early for Espiritu Santo where we were met by old friends Joses, Diocesan Secretary, though recently retitled Operations Manager and Augustine, Director of Education. We later met with Bishop James and his staff at the Diocesan offices. The next few days were spent visiting schools.

We were invited to the Cathedral on the Sunday for a Mothers' Union Service where 10 new members were admitted by Bishop James. It was a wonderful, joyous service and an honour to be present.

Before leaving Santo, we visited the Rural

Training Centre which had been relocated from Ambae and were struggling in the limited facilities. They were pleased to receive visitors but looked forward to returning to Ambae.

Finally, we met with members of the Mothers' Union who explained their work. We were particularly interested in their work around gender-based violence. Much good work is being carried out by the MU.

Leaving Vanuatu, we departed for the next leg of the project to Honiara to start the school visits.

We were honoured to be part of the Enthronement of Archbishop Leonard and took the greetings from Bishop Robert and



Cate brings greeting from the UK to Archbishop Leonard

the Diocese of Exeter, as well as greetings from CSM associates.

The next day Cate travelled out to Verana'aso to visit the Sisters and Daphne spent time in the Education Office. The Sisters are struggling to raise funds for a new chapel as theirs is unsafe. Sadly, it feels that the Sisters are the "poor relation" and receive little support.

During our stay in Honiara we also visited the Mothers' Union Headquarters and

received updates on their work. They were preparing for a grand celebration of 100 years of Mothers' Union in Melanesia later that month.

We also visited the Christian Care Centre, with its 40 residents including children and teenage girls who had escaped their abusive homes. The Sisters of the Church and the Melanesian Sisters work together at the CCC to provide a safe and homely environment. We were very impressed by the facilities in the beautiful setting.

During our stay we made a courtesy visit to David Ward the British High Commissioner to explain our project. It was interesting to meet up with him to hear more about the political situation in the Islands.

We were also invited to tea at Government House to meet Sir David and Lady Mary Yunagi, the recently appointed Governor General of the Solomon Islands. It was lovely to meet up with old friends, who certainly were having to get used to a very different way of life.

Eventually it was time to return home. It had been an exhausting but interesting and enjoyable three weeks. We hoped that we have made some significant contributions in education and relationship building. We thank MMUK for all their support and look forward to further engagement.

Revd Canon Cate Edmonds

PRAYER DIARY

WEEK 1

Sunday

Pray for the Anglican Church of Melanesia across the nine dioceses and all the staff at the Provincial Head Office in Honiara, that they may be protected from COVID-19. For Dr Abraham Hauriasi, the General Secretary.

For the New Zealand Trust Board and its directors, as they support the Anglican Church in Melanesia.

For the work of the Melanesian Mission UK in Prayer, People and Giving.

Monday

For the Diocese of Temotu and for the Bishop Willie Tungale in his new ministry as Diocesan Bishop. For all the staff working at the Headquarters at Lata.

For Revd Hillary Anisi and the Mission to Seafarers, through their centres in Honiara, Noro Port in the Western Province, Lata in Temotu and Port Vila in Vanuatu.

Tuesday

The Community of the Sisters of Melanesia and their work with women throughout the islands. For Head Sister Annie and Assistant Head Sister Jessy.

We pray for the fundraising efforts to enable the Community to rebuild their Chapel at Verana'aso.

Wednesday

For the Diocese of Ysabel, Bishop Ellison Quity and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters at Jejevo, Buala.

For volunteers from UK, Australia and New Zealand who share their skills in Melanesia.

For projects, which are driven by the needs of Melanesians.

Thursday

For the Diocese of Vanuatu & New Caledonia and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters in Luganville on the island of Santo as they recover and rebuild after Cyclone Harold.

We pray for Bishop James Tama and his family who lost so much in the Cyclone.

Friday

For the Society of St Francis throughout the world, including Melanesia and for their new Minister Provincial Br Worrick Marako, elected in March.

We pray for the greater care of creation and give thanks for the life and inspiration of St Francis.

For communities affected by climate change and pray for protection from unscrupulous mining and logging.

Saturday

The Diocese of Malaita, Diocesan Bishop Sam Sahu and Assistant Bishop Rickson George Maomaoru.

For Church schools, rural training centres, the theological colleges and John Coleridge Patteson University, staff and pupils.



THE ANGLICAN CHURCH
OF MELANESIA

WEEK 2

Sunday

For the Archbishop the Most Reverend Leonard Dawea. For all the staff in the Diocese of Central Melanesia.

For the Church's outreach work in hospitals, Rove Prison, women's issues, Green Apostles training and youth ministry.

Monday

For the Diocese of Guadalcanal, as Bishop Nathan Tome retires this September, and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters in Honiara. Pray for the Provincial Cathedral of St Barnabas, Honiara, and the Dean Philip Rongotha, and all who minister and worship there.

For all the different communities in Honiara, that there be a safe and clean environment for all these groups to flourish and to respect each other.

Tuesday

For the Community of the Sisters of the Church, and for Sr Veronica, Provincial Sister for the Solomon Islands Pacific Region. We give thanks for the Community's mission work with families and children around TNK and for their retreat ministry.

For the Christian Care Centre outside of Honiara and the new centre in Malaita. For the work on gender-based violence with police and community leaders. For Sr Phyllis Sau and Sr Doreen.

Wednesday

For the Diocese of Central Solomons, Bishop Ben Seka and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters in Tulagi.

For the shipyard at Taroaniara and all those who travel by sea around Melanesia, including those who work and go on missions aboard the Southern Cross. For the printing press in Honiara.

Thursday

For the Diocese of Banks and Torres, Bishop Patteson Alfred Worek and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters in Sola.

For the Mothers' Union in the Province, their Provincial President Pamela Abana and for their work with satellite churches, literacy programmes, couples counselling, the Girls Friendly Society, savings clubs and the Positive Parenting Programme.

Friday

For the Melanesian Brotherhood in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, Philippines and Canada and the Head Brother Jairus Honiseu. For the Companions worldwide working to support this community.

For School Partnerships and the opportunities for children and teachers in the UK and Melanesia to learn together. We pray for mutually beneficial gap year programmes and Ordinands placements for when restrictions are lifted.

Saturday

For the Diocese of Hanuato'o, as Bishop Alfred Karibongi retires this summer, and the staff at the Diocesan Headquarters in Kirakira.

For closer Diocesan Links bringing Christians around the world together in Christian Unity. For all those called to be missionaries in the past, now and in the future. For those who have given their life in service to God.

ACOM & CLIMATE CHANGE



The Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACoM) considers climate change one of the most significant environmental and social issues facing its community. With more than 100 years in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, ACoM understands that it can play a crucial role in solving future challenges.

Sea level rise, increased severity of storms and flooding, droughts, saltwater intrusion into freshwater agriculture, and reef habitat loss, all threaten to destabilise local communities. Knock-on social consequences could result in ethnic conflicts, land disputes, and internally displaced peoples. Latent social tensions may be exacerbated if adequate preparations are not undertaken.

One challenge is a lack of accurate local data and environmental monitoring. The Solomon Islands Government does not have sufficient infrastructure or systems to monitor ongoing environmental change. International monitoring is focused on the wider Pacific region. Fisheries, forests, extreme weather events, and shoreline changes, are not sufficiently studied. The reality is stark: without monitoring we cannot know local conditions. We therefore cannot develop evidence-based mitigation plans.

The Anglican Church of Melanesia considers this an opportunity. We can contribute to sustaining local communities and supporting the people of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. We are undertaking the following initiatives.

The ACoM Environment Observatory

The creation of the Anglican Church of Melanesia Environment Observatory is forging new alliances between the

environmental sciences and the Anglican Church of Melanesia. It aims to solve the dearth of local environmental monitoring. With a majority Anglican population, we are using churches throughout the archipelago as a network of scientific observatories. Installing monitoring equipment operated by clergy and lay people, churches are beginning to measure shoreline change, rainfall, storm intensity and duration. Daily readings are sent at regular intervals to ACoM headquarters, Honiara, where they will form the basis for scientific analysis.

In our first year of implementation we established three observatories on three islands. Students and faculty from the Solomon's Island University are undertaking shoreline measurements on Guadalcanal north shore.

In the coming years, we will expand stations to all islands with ACoM churches and integrate observing with clerical duties. This will produce a close-range portrait of environmental change and the basis for accurate mitigation strategies. Data will be in the public domain and a valuable resource to local and international climate change scientists. Rather than import costly monitoring equipment and expertise from abroad, the observatory repurposes existing church infrastructure and expertise.

This innovative approach is appealing to churches in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Anglican and other Christian communities in Australia, Vanuatu, Samoa, and the UK, are developing partnerships to extend the observatory network. Post-graduate architectural design courses on the observatory are being developed with the

Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology, Sydney; and, the School of Design, Harvard University. The observatory is being studied as a case study of the integration of science and religion in courses at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, and Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa.

Green Apostles

To link environmental sciences with the Anglican Church of Melanesia community we have developed the Green Apostle award in collaboration with the Melanesian Mission (UK). Each award is given to monitors operating Observatory stations. Interested lay members and clergy have been trained in measuring shoreline change, operating rain gauges, and notating storm intensity and durations. It incentivises, recognises and gives thanks for the efforts of our participants and contributes to skilling our community.

Education

We are undertaking initiatives to combine climate and environmental sciences with theological and religious education. With Bishop Patteson Theological College, international coastal scientists, theologians, and social scientists, are developing a curriculum that integrates the study of climate change science with theological training. With the faculty at the Solomon Islands National University, we are developing a climate change curriculum. Our educational efforts endeavour to cross conventional boundaries between science and religion.

Coastal Erosion

To facilitate climate change research, we have formed a partnership with the University of Southampton, UK. We are supporting PhD research into coastal change impacts in the Solomon Islands. The research combines physical evidence of historical shoreline change from remote-sensing technology and a study of social implications based on participatory workshops and interviews in affected communities.



Relocation

Widespread coastal erosion threatens the well-being and development of communities in the Solomon Islands. The majority of the population live in highly vulnerable, low-lying coastal areas and relocation is already occurring across the country, most notably on the outer reef islands and small offshore artificial islands. At present, relocation efforts are rarely assisted by the government or NGOs. Unaided relocation of whole communities has led to the formation of illegal settlements and overcrowding, land disputes, and social conflict. ACoM, the Melanesian Mission UK, and the University of Southampton recognise the immediate need to develop adequate strategies to manage climate-induced relocation and intend to develop partnerships to support relocation efforts.

Combined strategies

Through this work we hope to be good stewards of the Solomon Islands for future generations.

ACoM, Marie Schlenker & Adam Bobbette

Read more about the Marie's involvement with climate change research on our website www.mmuk.net and also on Marie's blog: <https://saveislands.home.blog/>

FROM COCONUT TO COMPUTER



Bishop Willie with Alex Leger filming for Blue Peter

Chapter 2

Bishops Willie continues with his story, and it's now 1966 -

It was at Alangaula School I met my friend Alex Leger. He came to teach as a (V.S.O) Volunteer Service Organisation. After we

left Alangaula School I did not see him for 30 years until I came to England to serve in Chester Diocese. Alex and I took a production team to film two programmes for Blue Peter about the Solomon Islands. At a later date we wrote a book together about our life and time during the period when he was

teaching, and I was a pupil at school. The title of the book is "Marooned in the Pacific" It is available as a Kindle edition.

I graduated with my first Certificate signed by Tony Childs, Chief Education Officer for the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. That piece of paper, which was bearing the signature with the Official Seal, made me a very proud young man indeed. I was somebody who could be recognised as having an achievement. I could show that piece of paper and could be accepted for employment. And not only that, I could now speak and write in English.

In 1968 I went to Pawa School, and there I was taught by the Revd. Desmond Proberts Headmaster, Cambridge graduates John Pinder and John Rolfe, Jim Nolan from Ireland, Doug Henry from Australia, Bob Hunt from New Zealand and other young white teachers who spoke to us using their first language. Also, during worship in the Chapel, we used the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, and our English Hymnal, which we used to sing from, were great instruments in our learning Oxford English.

The Bishop of Melanesia, John Wallace Chisholm came to Melanesia in 1969, and he decided to transfer most of the education to the Government but kept a few schools under Church authority. It was his plan to amalgamate the two separate Secondary Schools for boys and girls into one, and so created the birth of Selwyn College. Towards the end of 1969 Pawa Staff and the pupils of forms 1 to 3 went to Ngagilagu, Guadalcanal. I was chosen as Head Prefect for the School,

having been a prefect previously at St Barnabas Alangaula and All Hallows Pawa. The staff thought I would make a good Head Boy.

This was to be the first time Pamua, Bungana, Tasia girls ever meet boys from Pawa, Alangaula, Maravovo. So special rules were required, the School Rule, "no special boy or girl friend at all to be maintained at all times." The Head Boy and all my Prefects had to keep a watchful eye on the pupils, but at the same time human nature took over and our teachers both male and female became rather close for the first time. It was a happy school and I was proud of my Headmaster Revd. Tom Tyler, John Pinder, John Rolfe, Jim Nolan, Doug Henry, Kathleen Holgate, Jennifer Pinder, Marjorie Hastings, Richard Roberts and all the staff from UK, Australia and New Zealand.

+Willie Alaha Pwaisiho O.B.E

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 will appear in the next magazine, or go to our website to read the full article www.mmuk.net/news/from-coconut-to-computer/



CSC CELEBRATES

2020 marks the 50th Anniversary of CSC in the Solomon Islands and the 150th Anniversary of the Community of the Sisters of the Church.

On 5 April 1870 Emily Harriet Elizabeth Ayckbown, in a small room in Kilburn, received the habit from Fr Kirkpatrick and became the first Sister of the Church. A friend reported that it was very simple, no luxuries even in religious observance, but a spiritual atmosphere almost overpowering. Then later after the visitors had left they sat on the floor talking of all they hoped and future plans.

The future led to Sisters going overseas, first to Canada in 1890, Australia in 1892. Before Emily's death on 5 June 1900 there were 150 sisters working on five continents, in schools and caring in many areas of social and spiritual need. Emily our founder was a woman of vision, compassion and energy, or as was written in a Rap song for our 125th, 'She was a woman of vision and a woman of nerve; she lived to pray and she lived to serve, Sister Emily. Emily was a woman of God, in whose steps others have trod. Michael and the angels surely smile on the woman who'd go the extra mile, Mother Emily.'

Emily spent sixteen years working on The Rule for our Community. The Introduction tells us that we were founded to pray and work to the honour and glory of God, for the coming of God's reign on earth. She placed the Community under the patronage of St Michael and the angels, pointing us to a life of both worship and active ministry, of mingled adoration and action. She told us that like the angels, while we labour for others, we still adore God, and whatever our activity, if we are true to grace we may, like the angels, continually behold the face of God.

In our centenary year, 1970, Sisters Beryl from England, Helen Jane from Canada and Frances

from Australia went to the Solomon Islands. So we were planted and have bloomed. The Sisters in the Solomon Islands were initially part of to the Australia Province, and in 2001 became their own Province with Sr Doreen elected as the first Provincial Sister. Perhaps some readers were amongst the thousand or so who were at Tetete ni Kolivuti then. Like the Solomon Islands itself, TNK had developed over the years, and whilst there is need for improvements in infrastructure it still remains a 'hill of prayer' and place of welcome.

Our work has often been associated with childcare, religious education, teaching and work with the marginalised. Many schools founded by CSC still flourish, no longer dependant on the Community running them. Some of our schools connect with one another through The Emily Group. Children and women are supported in the Care Centres in the Solomon Islands, with food parcels in Bristol, and through pastoral assistance, ministries of caring.



Mother Emily

Men and women who want to be involved with CSC often become associate members. This is a mutually supportive and enriching link, first at Kilburn, then at Ham Common and now at Gerrards Cross, where the building works are complete and the Sisters are establishing a ministry of welcome and



Sisters of the Church from Melanesia at Gerrards Cross

hospitality. When the current restrictions are lifted do arrange a stay if you want to step into a place of reflection and prayer, or are interested in meeting us.

The future now, in the Pacific we hope to eventually have Sisters living on Vanuatu. We are committed to renewing interest in the Religious Life and welcome enquiries from those interested in joining us, or in living alongside the Community without a lifelong commitment.

Sr Catherine CSC

In our next magazine we will be reflecting on the Society of St Francis' work in the Solomon Islands, also celebrating 50 years in the region in 2020, and 40th anniversary of the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia.

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To learn more about this international order, visit the Community's website:

international.sistersofthechurch.org.uk



NOW THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

On Holy Saturday I arrived back to a much changed and much quieter London than the one I had left a month before. Having confirmed my safe arrival in the Solomon Islands in an email exchange with Katie Drew (MMUK Executive Officer), who had been kindly helping me to organise the trip, she replied, “Now the adventure begins!” Neither of us knew at that stage how accurate her response would prove to be!

As an ordinand in the Church of England, I was eager to experience the life of the Anglican Church and the shape of formation in a very different context before being ordained deacon and beginning my curacy this summer. I am also currently researching for a PhD thesis exploring how the church engages faithfully in politics and so found myself particularly drawn to the Melanesian Brotherhood’s recent history in their pivotal role as peacemakers during the ethnic tensions at the turn of the millennium. Particularly striking is the Brothers’ distinctive and committed pattern of prayer and worship, which is not a retreat from the world, but the structure and life-source that enables them to live fully for the world, serving their local communities and wider society so faithfully.

I was initially intending to visit for a couple of months, throughout Lent, Holy Week and over Easter, with the purpose of participating in and learning from the communal life and worship of the Brothers.

Immersing myself in the community at Tabalia as much as possible gave me a chance to experience their beautifully simple but varied life together. And I loved all of it– from daily attending the very early First Office, (walking to the chapel in the dark, dodging frogs along the way!), to eating kasava and kakake (affectionately known as “swamp taro”), attempting to fix the waterpipe after heavy rain fall but spending most of the time swimming in the river, as well as several logging trips with the Brothers to collect firewood. It was a real privilege to be welcomed in by the Brothers, Novices and Aspirants and to be allowed to join them in their everyday lives. I was also given the privilege of preaching on Mothering Sunday, where Novice Pateson very kindly helped me to write and deliver sections of the sermon in Pijin, as well as narrating the Passion play on Palm Sunday, which thankfully was in English!

However, during this time with the Brothers, I was also becoming increasingly aware of the spreading pandemic of COVID-19. Thankfully because of internet access at Kohimarama Theological College I was able to stay relatively up to date as things changed across the world. Yet, because of the rapid speed at which things changed, I was not able to move my flights forward quickly enough to avoid being stuck in Solomons indefinitely, as Australia, and then the Solomon Islands too, closed their borders!

Being stranded in Solomons felt very surreal. On the one hand, I was in paradise with beautiful idyllic surroundings, as life continued pretty much as normal at Tabalia and across the Islands. Yet every time I would walk up to “Kohi” to speak with friends and family back home, I would be updated on the worsening spread of this deadly virus. This led to a time of uncertainty, for me, but perhaps primarily for my family back home, as I had three flights cancelled in my attempt to return to the UK. With things changing not just daily but hourly, and no clear indication of how long the lockdown would last, it was unclear just how long I would be stranded in Tabalia. But I was reassured by the Brothers that I was welcome to stay with them for as long as necessary, even if that meant being there at Christmas, and being ordained whilst I was out there! Though they also knew my need to get back to my wife Lily, and so continued to pray for me.

Having been back to Honiara a couple of times to speak with the British High Commissioner, however, it became clear that there was little that could be done in terms of arranging travel home other than praying and waiting for things to open up again. Ultimately though, it was hard to become overly anxious about my situation partly because of where I was stranded. I remember one Sunday afternoon messing around in the canoe in the sea with some of the younger boys and one of the Brothers, and just thinking how fortunate I was to be doing this whilst everyone back in the UK was stuck inside! But also during this time, the rhythm of prayer and worship at Tabalia really gave me a sense of peace, as well as learning from and being held by the Brothers’ own deep trust and reliance in God that all would be well.

Of course, we were also aware of the potential threat and impact of COVID-19 arriving in the Solomon Islands, not just

on the limited health resources but also the social and economic implications. We began to discuss some of the ways the Brothers needed to prepare practically, in modelling good hygiene both for their own sake, but also for all the communities across the islands. But most importantly, the Brothers continue to prepare spiritually, to be there for the people of Melanesia, shining the light of Christ in the darkness, knowing that whatever comes their way God is with them. Or as the Pijin version of John’s Gospel beautifully puts it; “nao matta stay dark... erytime get light.”

Eventually I was able to be squeezed onto a US repatriation flight as the 200th and final passenger on the plane. The circumstances of the last-minute flight meant I sadly missed Easter weekend at Tabalia and had to say very rushed goodbyes, but perhaps not having long drawn out goodbyes was more appropriate as I very much hope to return. The flight itself left Honiara, the first time there had ever been a plane of that size on the runway, to head to San Francisco via Hawaii, before I caught my onward flight to London. By the time I arrived back in the UK I had completed a round the world trip, just not in the circumstances I had quite imagined!

It is very hard to thank the Brotherhood, and all those I met, enough for their hospitality, generosity, and kindness throughout my time with them, particularly under such uncertain circumstances. During my stay I was struck by their warmth but also their sense of fun. Their commitment to God and to one another is dedicated and sincere, yet at the same time full of life and laughter! I have left with much to be thankful for, but also much to learn from them, and I am certain that this experience will continue to shape my own life of faith and ministry for the rest of my life.

Sam Rylands



Former staff and students of Selwyn College: *Back L-R*; Rawcliffe Ziza (deputy private secretary to the Governor General), Elizabeth Sinewala (assistant to Lady Vunagi), Clera Waokea (assistant to the High Commissioner), David Wippell, Eliam Tangirongo, Trevor Ramoni (head of protocol); ***Front L-R***; John Pinder, Lady Mary Vunagi, Sir David Vunagi, Brian Macdonald-Milne

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S UK RECEPTION

In October the new Governor General of Solomon Islands, the Right Reverend Sir David Vunagi, was in London to be knighted by the Queen. During the visit, MMUK trustee, the Reverend Catherine Duce, hosted a reception for Sir David and Lady Mary Vunagi at St. Martin in the Fields.

It was a lovely opportunity for old friends to welcome the Governor General and his wife back to London. Sir David has been a servant

of the Church of Melanesia for many years, serving as headmaster of Selwyn College, Dean of Honiara and Archbishop of Melanesia. In retirement David returned briefly to his home island of Santa Isabel where he realised a long ambition to plant an arboretum but was then called back to be headmaster of Selwyn College. Mary, meanwhile, was back in Honiara as President of the Mothers' Union. Earlier this year, David was elected Governor General.



Past and present Melanesian Mission Trustees

Back L-R; Catherine Duce, Ian Drew, Katie Drew, Brian Macdonald-Milne:

Front L-R; John Pinder, Lady Mary Vunagi, Sir David Vunagi, Jocelyn Squires.

SISTER HELEN BARRETT MBE, AM, CSI

1921 - 2019

Helen was the last of a generation of extraordinary women who served with the Melanesian Mission. She was also the most highly decorated member of staff.

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Helen's father was dean of Brisbane Cathedral and from her earliest years she was immersed in Mothers' Union activities through her mother and by contact with missionaries passing through Brisbane. Although she contracted polio at the age of ten, fortunately she made a complete recovery with no disabilities.

Helen trained as a nurse in Sydney from 1939 to 1942 and then went on to train in midwifery in Brisbane and in infant and children's welfare, so by the end of her training she was a highly qualified, triple certificated nurse.

Helen was accepted for nursing in the Melanesian Mission in 1947 and was to remain in Melanesia for 37 years, finally retiring in 1983. Her first posting was at Lepi in Santa Isabel, where she worked with Christine Woods establishing outreach district work. Her next post was at Kerepei clinic on Ugi Island where as well as caring for the local people, she was school nurse for Pawa and Alangaula Schools. She would also make the perilous journey regularly across to Pamua Girls' School on Makira.

From 1957 to 1967 Helen was school nurse and headmistress of Tasia girls' school on Santa Isabel. Although Isabel was the island she loved best, Helen agreed in 1968 to be matron of Fauabu Hospital on Malaita. She was to remain at Fauabu for 17 years. She taught students clinical practice and ran maternal and child clinics and TB and leprosy clinics. She valued district work which sometimes involved days of

strenuous walking to villages in the bush. She was awarded the MBE in 1970.

Returning to Australia in 1984, Helen was asked by the Mothers' Union to go to the Torres Straits Islands to work for six months. Helen's work in nursing and with women in Solomon Islands and Torres Straits was recognised with the award of the Order of Australia and in 2005 with the Cross of Solomon Islands, the highest award in that country.

In retirement Helen remained in touch with her many friends in Australia and Solomon Islands. She visited the Solomons for the last time in 2009, aged 89.

I was personally very grateful when she intervened with the bishop in 1970 to stop me being posted to a new school against my will. Brian Macdonald-Milne adds 'What a remarkable and inspiring person she was! I was in her care when she was at Tasia and I was put out by her in isolation in a bush house at the school, where she attended to my medical and other needs!'

Jennifer Probets writes, 'What a lovely person she was, so calm and caring. It was great to have her at Kerepei. We felt secure with her presence there. We all have special and treasured memories. R.I.P. dear Helen, with grateful thanks.'

Canon John Pinder, MMUK Trustee

The Melanesian Mission (MMUK) is an Anglican Mission agency that provides support to the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACoM), through prayer, people and giving.

Please visit our website for the latest news and prayer requests from MMUK and ACoM.

Our extensive film archive includes an introduction to the charity narrated by the Charity's President, the Most Revd & Right Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, films on the religious orders and first-hand accounts of climate change.

To receive the charity's regular email newsletter subscribe at www.mmuk.net/subscribe.

You can also follow the charity on Twitter www.twitter.com/melanesianm and Facebook www.facebook.com/melanesianmission

If you would like more copies of this magazine, leaflets on the work of the charity or would like to book a speaker for when restrictions are lifted for public gatherings, please contact the charity.

Many thanks to all who have contributed articles and photographs for this edition of the magazine.



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O Jesus,
Be the canoe that holds me up in the sea of life;
Be the rudder that keeps me in the straight road;
Be the outrigger that supports me in times of temptation.
Let your Spirit be my sail that carries me through each day.
Keep my body strong so I can paddle steadfastly
on in the voyage of life. Amen

UK Registered Charity Number 1104551
President of MMUK - The Most Reverend and Right Honourable the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby



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