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Hi Brothers & Sisters

Greetings again in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I hope that August was a good month for you.

August was quiet and productive, but not without drama. For the most part, I feel like I've been plodding along steadily after the months of crazy running. We did manage to complete the annual house washing session, inside and out (MOLD FREE!!!!). While working on my office, I reamed out the bookcase – after years of procrastination – and carried six boxes of books to the Melanesian Bible College library, where they are now waiting to be processed.

A brief planning session with brother Michael Tatara led to the start of the renovation project on the library building. Michael is currently rewiring and re-walling (!) what was the basic (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year) classroom. The dividing wall between the classroom and current library will eventually be removed, so in preparation I shifted the entire commentary section, along with boxes of books waiting to be processed, onto temporary shelving. As you can see from the pictures, things are a bit cramped, but we are looking forward greatly to the changes. The library will remain where it currently is – hopefully with new shelving, funds permitting - but the printing area will occupy the other end of the building, with the literacy 'classroom' in between, doubling as a work area for library patrons and the print shop.



*The library ... BEFORE.*

*And NOW (next 3 pictures)*





In past reports I have mentioned Indagen village in Kabwum District, many times. Through my roommate, Miring, I first went to Indagen in 1997 and have visited the village fifteen times since then, having a close working relationship with the Christians there and those living here in Lae. Indagen isn't easy to reach. The main options are by ship to Wasu and then car/leg the rest of the way, or by small plane. With soaring airfares (no pun intended), many people choose to do a two day hike over the Sarawaget Range. For as long as I can remember, the government here has been promising to build a Lae-Kabwum road without making any moves to do so.

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the Lutheran Church in Indagen celebrated 100 years since the arrival there of the first Lutheran missionaries to Indagen, the first contact with the Gospel they had had. It was a huge celebration with years of planning going into it and around 5,000 people in attendance. The excitement and anticipation led many people from Lae, and other areas of the Huon Peninsula, to travel to Indagen. Many were either unable to afford plane tickets (K840.00 or CAN\$340.00 return for a 45 minute flight), or were too late to find space on a ship, and thus opted to walk. Setting out about a week before the celebration, many small groups headed off into the bush for what they expected to be two days of travel. Many were inexperienced, inadequately dressed, and not carrying enough supplies, and they soon ran into trouble as heavy rains started and temperatures dropped. In Lae, we had four or five days of continuous rain and temperatures in the 70s and low 80s Fahrenheit. Acclimatized to high 80s to mid-90s temperatures, this felt cold. The trekkers however experienced temperatures much closer to freezing with wet, damp conditions. Hypothermia set in.

Ten days after setting out, reports of missing groups of hikers started reaching us in Lae. Reports of bodies being found along the way reached Indagen, and when the PNG Prime Minister, the

Governor General, the Morobe Governor, and several other government officials, arrived in Indagen on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, they were met by a community in mourning, not the joyously excited crowd they had anticipated. A helicopter company was called, and the search began. Now, more than two weeks later, reports are still sketchy. The last report we heard was that eleven bodies had been brought to Lae, along with six survivors. It is likely that some bodies – those of people walking to Indagen from other parts of Kabwum District and Finschhafen - were taken directly back to their villages. The death toll still isn't clear, but some reports set it closer to 20. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the body of Miring and Rose's young cousin, Ramson Sol, was also recovered, along with another relative. Please pray for the Indagen community, both in Kabwum and Lae, as well as for the families who lost love ones.

**Special request for my Canadian readers:** Do you have old issues of the Gospel Herald that you don't need? Along with the books I mentioned before, I have sent all of my Gospel Herald magazines to the MBC library for future use by our students. Mail between Canada and PNG wasn't always reliable, with some issues going to places like Macau before arriving here, and others never arriving. In order to fill in the gaps, I am looking for the following issues:

- All of 2002, except September.
- January, 2003.
- April, 2007.
- April, 2008.
- September, 2009.
- December, 2013.



*Jab teaching a class in the basic year classroom in 2017.  
The next two photos show the classrooms now as preparations continue for next year.*





### Prayer Points:

1. MBC library renovation project, and Michael Tatara and family dealing with ongoing Malaria and head colds.
2. The Indagen and Kabwum communities and the families of those who died en route to Indagen.
3. Taylor & Robyn David, whom I asked you to pray for in the last report. Taylor, who has been experiencing seizures, was found to have a mass in his brain and was hospitalized and started on a trial of Tuberculosis drugs. A second cat scan, several weeks later, showed that the mass had shrunk slightly in size. The treatment since then has been continued and tomorrow he will go back for a third cat scan, after which the doctor will decide what will happen next. Please continue to pray for continued improvement.
4. The Kamkamung congregation mourning the loss of brother Stanley, who was stabbed a couple of weeks ago and died this past Sunday in hospital.
5. Magdalene, a regular visitor to the MBC congregation, who we have been studying with as time has permitted.
6. Plans to host a literacy training session in early October for several Christians involved in prison ministry, and another wanting to start a literacy class in her settlement. The Buimo prison, here in Lae, has asked for their regular visiting church workers to consider teaching the inmates to read

and write, starting next year. Please pray for this session, as well as whatever happening in coming months with getting this ministry off the ground.

May God bless you in daily. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me via the address from which you receive this report.

With love in Him,

*Ruth*

**Sponsors:**

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