

Brian and Helen's Furlough News,



PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Although we are in the US on furlough, our hearts and minds remain firmly entrenched in Papua New Guinea. We are always grateful to hear news from PNG and keep our “fingers in the pot” of God’s events in PNG. Helen regularly consults with the clinic and enjoys the fast internet connections that make research so much easier here in the USA. In addition to his other responsibilities, Brian is busy with software and hardware research for the SIL PNG branch. And David keeps up with many friends from PNG, most are now scattered around the world, but some remain in New Guinea.

BTA is a partner organization to SIL and Wycliffe. It is composed of Papua New Guineans who are committed to seeing the Bible translated into their own languages. We work closely with BTA as together we desire to see God’s Word in the 850 languages of PNG.



Steven Thomas,
Director of BTA

BTA – Bible Translation Association of Papua New Guinea

Letter from Steven Thomas, BTA Director

“If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land.”

- 2 Chronicles 7:14

These words were to King Solomon when God appeared before him as an answer to his prayer. King Solomon sought God first for wisdom to lead the people of Israel. God heard King Solomon’s prayer but set a condition before the people of Israel to repent. God promised forgiveness and healing of their land. The following story very much reminded me of this scripture verse as I saw events unfold.

Three weeks ago I (Steven Thomas) was invited to Enga Province (my home area) to speak to church leaders about Bible Translation ministry during their provincial day of prayer. In 2000, the Enga provincial government Assembly passed a resolution to mark 17 April each year as a day of prayer and fasting. The last two years for prayer and fasting were disrupted. First, the provincial government was suspended in 2001, and then last year there was the general election and everything almost came still.

Although I had a few things to do, this was something I did not want to miss. Luke Kembol, a church relations officer with the Enga provincial government arranged my travel. I arrived in Wabag, provincial capital of Enga on 16 April. I walked around the town and saw that the stage was built for the next day. That night in my quiet time I prayed for God’s blessing and His presence next day. Then, I went to sleep.

At about 1:30 am (17 April) I woke up startled with what sounded like loud explosions. The big building next door was being ripped apart after a fight over a prime town land dispute, which resulted in two deaths. I sat up that night and prayed against any disruption next day. I prayed for peace.

Next day, the turn-out was small but lively and a strong group began to come together. Women play an important part of our church here. And praise God the town was peaceful. All church leaders from every denomination came together. Over 25 pastors from Catholic, Lutheran, SDA, and Pentecostal churches attended. After the main message by a Catholic Priest, the pastors knelt down in a circle to pray to God. First, they repented and prayed for forgiveness for things they said against each other that may have caused ill feeling and division. Then they asked God for forgiveness and restoration as spiritual





leaders in Enga.

Then they invited the Governor of Enga, Mr. Peter Ipatas and his political leaders and prayed for them. The pastors stood in a circle around their political leaders. They asked God to give them wisdom and knowledge and not to trust their own understanding.

News Flash

As many of you know, David has started his freshman year in Architecture at the home the Hoakies- Virginia Tech. We have had several opportunities to visit on weekends, and he is doing quite well. He says that studies are hard, but he enjoys what he is doing. **Prayer:** Pray that he will find a good church/fellowship home at college. Pray also for cultural adjustments as the US is really a foreign country to him.

Helen is enjoying time to reconnect with many friends. She was blessed by her time with her camera during the picturesque Vermont fall. She will be attending several medical meetings next month- First in New Orleans, then Louisville, KY. **Prayer:** Traveling Safety

I (Brian) have accepted some computer consulting assignments for the PNG Branch. This involves some programming and research on the Internet. I am preparing for three important Board meetings in November, and need wisdom particularly leading a smaller group charged with a comprehensive evaluation of all International Language Software that SIL has produced, world-wide. **Prayer:** Much wisdom in this evaluation process. I live in a world where solving technical problems is ministry- directly affecting the delivery of God's Word.

Then the public servants came forward led by acting administrator Mr. Albert McSaen. Quite a few public servants turned up. Mr. McSaen is a committed Christian himself.

I was given a chance to speak after the prayers. I spoke about *a need to speak to God in our own context. That God wants to speak to us in our culture, language and in our own settings.* I spoke to them about the Enga Bible and the need for Old Testament translation. I also mentioned about the opportunity there is to have the Jesus film in the Enga language.

I returned to Port Moresby the next day with a deep peace. Pastors and Christians that day took a small step to trust a big God Who can take a giant leap in the lives of the people of Enga.

Luke Kembol, the organizing committee chairman called the following week to say that for the first time, the church leaders met together after this event. And for the first time the church leaders were united and of one mind to work together. They formed Enga Pastors Patreonal and formed leaders who will lead. I look forward to going back and see what they can do to help do the Enga Jesus film and Old Testament translation. The church is the rightful leader in such an undertaking.

Satan tried to disrupt the day but God was in control. Though small in number, I sensed the presence of God. We know that God is faithful to His word and He will honor the faith as expressed by the church leaders, political leaders and the public servants of Enga. We share this now with faces and pictures so that you as brothers and sisters can stand with us. So that God may be glorified among the people of Enga.

The Prayer Corner:

Praise: In the midst of economic and political uncertainty, the Gospel is going out in Papua New Guinea. Enga Province is known for its outlaw warrior gangs, but is becoming known for its prayer warriors.

Prayer: Ask that what has begun in Enga province will continue. Pray for pastors in Enga province, that they will stand united in and through God. That they will reach out to those who do not know Him and that they will bring glory to God and God alone.