

## Visit to Bougainville, PNG 9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011

- Wed 9<sup>th</sup> 12.40 pm Arrived in Port Moresby, went to MAPANG Guesthouse.
- Thu 10<sup>th</sup> Left at 4.00am For Jackson airport.
- 7.40 am Met by Sammy Maurua/Apollos Kintau (new Kidrons Administrator) .Went back to Adeeves Guesthouse for introductions and to give Apollos a gifted laptop.



- 10.00 am Matthias Lui arrived so we all went to the airport to collect him and had a briefing by Sammy of the programme.
- Lunch with key local pastors who showed a video of the recent covenant ceremony; then had dinner together at the guesthouse.
- Fri 11<sup>th</sup> 6.00 am After breakfast crossed Buka Strait in a small boat to Bougainville island, where the Toyota Land cruisers were waiting for customers.
- 9.00 am Departed on a six hour journey through rough terrain and river crossings; arrived in the rain at Siwai Sammy & Eunice's family land). I had a lovely welcome ceremony led by Bible College Students followed by lunch with 20 people who live on site. I had dinner with Sammy, Mathias, and Apollos at Kidron Guest House.
- Sat 12<sup>th</sup> 9.00 am Spoke for an hour with the Bible College students. After lunch visited where the I.N./NZ Aid water tanks were installed; visited a college of 600 students located down roads NZ cars could not handle!
- Visit to Buin was called off after river level was up too much; it gets dark around 6pm generator is on from 6 until 9pm.
- Sun 13<sup>th</sup> 6.30 am Breakfast; then was told at 9.30 am that I was preaching at the 10.30 am service. The service lasted three hours – I really enjoyed the singing and worship.
- Mon 14<sup>th</sup> Went to Kawua "Haggai Local Fellowship" in Buin, under Pastor David and Anita – very impressive leader.
- Tue 15<sup>th</sup> 5.30 am Woken to be told a truck was picking us up in 30 minutes. Left at 6.30 am for Arawa and arrived at 12 noon . We were sent to a guesthouse for lunch/rest and tea. Set up Apollos and Sammy on Wifi modems. Matthias taught Apollos how to send an email; then later on to Pastor Joel and Beverly's mid-week meeting in a hall. The mayor called Paul (a new convert) spoke and I was the guest speaker.
- 9.00 pm Left for Buka, arrived at 12.30 am – caught a boat across Buka Passage and arrived at the guest house at 1.00 am.
- Wed 16<sup>th</sup> 6.00 am To airport, caught plane for Port Moresby at 8.00 am arriving (via Raul Island) at 12.00 pm

**PREAMBLE:**

I had no idea how bad the infrastructure was at Bougainville, how expensive it was to do anything, and how the civil war scars are so painfully obvious.

The island has only a few kilometres of paved road, there are 100+ river crossings from Buka to the very south. For some of the rivers, the waters sometimes reached only a few centimetres from the windows. When it rains, the rivers become impossible to cross, the only vehicles that can make the journey are Toyota Land Cruisers (which were the only vehicles seen) and are able to handle the off-road conditions. It felt on the six hour journey to Kidron Ministry base at Siwai, it felt like I was on an off-road adventure in the Tararuas!



Because the Toyota Land Cruisers are incredibly expensive here, everything becomes expensive as the cost is passed on. The costs for food items are more or less the same as new Zealand except what is grown locally. As most only earn a few kina a hour life is hard and even harder for a huge group who don't have jobs. Those who tend family land or cash crops find the transportation costs erode any profits. Only three cities have regular power, 95% of the population seem to use diesel generators ,if they can afford them.

The civil war which in ended in 2005 killed 10,000 from fighting and another 5,000 from medical issues due to the blockade that prevented medical supplies from getting through. Many like Sammy hid in the bush during the ten years which meant a large group of 20-35 year olds missed out on an education The locals call it "The Crisis". Rebels basically wiped out all the infrastructure and got rid of BCM mining which employed 4,000 locals. The fear of a flare up as Bougainville approaches it's referendum in 2015 (whether to split from PNG) is very real, with a local MP saying that they believe there are now more arms in Bougainville than when there was a civil war.

The context above and the primitive world of Bougainville where the majority still live in thatched huts and cook over an open fire is the world that Sammy operates out of. Spiritually, Bougainville is an amazing place (if you can gauge an accurate assessment after six days).



I met with Pastor Albert (AOG) (middle left photo) who was one of the seven founders of the civilian BRA guerrillas, Pastor Terry Local MP plus four other leaders who shared with us the joy of the signing of a covenant with the President declaring Bougainville is a nation "covenanted" to God. 3,000 turned up to witness and celebrate this great event only a few weeks ago. There were six signatories witnessing the President's signature, of which Sammy was one. Sammy was one of the nation's leaders to go to New Zealand in 2005 (to Burnham) to work through the details of a peace agreement with BRA, PNG and PNG Freedom Fighters.

All the three Kidron Ministries churches I attended were in good health and had wonderful worship. I found them very responsive to my preaching. I spoke at Siwai, Buin and Arawa. They had very good pastors. Pastor David from Buin was particularly impressive – he had just planted a church in New Britain and had ordered 4,000 kina of clothes from the Solomon's and is about to open a clothes shop at the church. He has financed this largely himself; he is giving this shop to the church when they have repaid what it owes him. None of the churches are big, but neither are the populations where they live. Most people in the south live down tracks that have no sign posts. The town mayor of Arawa, called Paul had just come back to faith in Jesus. He shared at the Arawa meeting how he had dedicated Arawa to Jesus and was now meeting with Pastors to plan some public meetings to intentionally declare that Arawa belongs to Jesus.

The Kidron Bible College had nine girls and five boys all in their 20's. Their two different 4am prayer meetings were very inspiring - the boys did "spiritual warfare" type praying – very loud in the stillness of the morning and the girls were very worshipful on guitars. Kidron ministries is based at Siwai; in the middle of nowhere in the south – a burnt out Japanese tank is the only landmark a few kilometres away.

The 66 water tanks IN gave through NZ Aid have had a huge positive impact on the little villages in which they were placed. There was a huge amount of gratitude expressed at the several sites I visited.

The tanks are for drinking water only, collected from rainfall. The very important social interaction for women that takes place when washing clothes and bathing in the river still remains.

