

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

May 2023

Thank You from Solomon Islands Mission

Dear VIA Sponsors,

My name is Pr Vince David Vughere and I am the Ministerial Association Secretary and VIA/Global Mission Director for the Solomon Islands Mission. On the behalf of all Solomon Island VIAs I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the VIA team in Australia for the work and support you rendered towards my VIAs in 2022.

The year began negatively for us with the impacts of COVID-19, but we endured the difficulty and got through those times. The pandemic has not stopped the ministry of our humble VIAs scattered throughout our beloved nation of the Solomon Islands.

I must admit as I compare the work our VIAs are doing in contrast to my full-time workers, I can truly and honestly make this claim that my VIAs rank at the top when it comes to soul winning. So, thank you so much for the service you rendered towards my VIAs here in the Solomon Islands.

Remember that the souls won this year by our VIAs are yours and mine as well. We all indirectly contribute to the winning of souls through our VIAs. THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN. May God bless each one of us as we seek to serve Him faithfully.



Solomon Islands Mission

6,000+ New Church Groups in PNG

During the COVID lockdowns, churches in PNG were closed and families worshipped in and near their homes. This led to others hearing their worship and singing and being invited to join in. Many of these small groups grew beyond the seating capacity of the pre-COVID church buildings. The result is that after lockdowns ended, PNG Church leaders reported the formation of more than 6,000 new congregations! This places huge strains on the need for more trained pastors, church buildings and other resources. Thank you for supporting VIA as we support hundreds of volunteer church leaders in new and often remote areas.

VIA Update by the Numbers



With all glory going to our Lord and Saviour, we are celebrating the results of the faithfulness of VIA workers. In just the six months from July to December 2022, **463** VIAs cared for **1,138** churches. Baptisms of **1,574** precious people were celebrated and the VIAs are currently studying God's word with an additional **6,636** community contacts and all this occurred even though there was political conflict in PNG and baptism numbers dropped because ministers could not travel to do the baptisms in many churches. We praise God for His goodness and faithfulness!

"You Can't Attend Church Without These!"

Ela David's heart had been moved by the words of truth Jerry shared from God's book. Jerry Manedeta, is a VIA missionary serving in the Solomon Islands Mission, Guadalcanal. She had never heard some of these things before and she worshipped with a growing group of others whose hearts had been stirred.

Ela attended Bible studies with the missionary until she knew she wanted to be baptised, but her husband was not pleased. He forbade her to be baptised. She continued with the studies so one day when she was out he found her worship clothes, cut into them with his knife and then burned them. "You can't attend church without these!" he triumphantly exclaimed when she returned home that day. Ela continues with her deep desire to be baptised and Jerry requests that we please pray for Ela.

Dear VIA Sponsors, Let us again praise God together as we continue to support these dedicated soul winners on the front lines of the battle. They certainly deserve our utmost, sacrificial support.

“Nothing is Impossible with God”

VIA Wheatley Vazua, Savo Island, SIM,

Soon after beginning work on Savo Island in the Solomon Islands Mission, Wheatley Vazua recognised real problems within the small communities he was reaching out to. Due to extreme financial difficulties many individuals were leaving their families to seek employment in larger towns. In extreme cases both parents left seeking work and children were left at home, with not enough money to continue their education.

Wheatley and his colleagues have been visiting these struggling households, offering small tokens of help and praying with them. In those households where the parents remained, other difficulties arose.

In one case that Wheatley shares, the wife stated that she wanted to be baptised, but her husband threatened to kill her if she went ahead with her plans. She felt God moving on her heart, and she decided that she would follow His call and be baptised, no matter what might happen to her. Wheatley shared that God is always ready to keep His promise to those who are willing to do His will. After her baptism God worked a miracle in her husband’s heart. He accepted her back into their home and invited the VIA team to visit, talk with his family and then pray for them.

Wheatley is so thankful to God for his providences. “I thank God,” he says. “Nothing is impossible with God, but all things are possible.”

“Come Out of Her My People”

When asked to share what the most rewarding experience during her previous six months of missionary service was, Sylvia Murei, a VIA from Bougainville Mission in PNG, said that she was thrilled to see many non-Adventists coming from other faith groups and joining the family of God.

She shared that in one of the non-Adventist areas where they ran a series of meetings, the whole village accepted the message at the conclusion of the program and are now keeping the Sabbath.

“I see the power of God working in people’s lives,” she said. “Eight of them have already been baptised, including two village chiefs and a pastor of the Revival Church along with his wife. Others have committed their lives and are awaiting baptism.”

Let’s praise God for the amazing things he is doing in the life of Sylvia and the hearts of all those who are accepting her invitation to join the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” Matthew 9:37-38

Never Stand on a Bible!

The priest’s angry voice rang through the little Catholic church of a village in Malaita, Solomon Islands. What he did next shocked the watching congregation. He opened a Bible, placed it on the ground and stepped on it. “You are not to follow the Bible teaching as the SDAs do,” he thundered. “And you are not to allow them to enter our village.”

Sadly, within two years he was dead, and another priest had arrived to take up leadership in the village. His attitude towards the SDAs was very different, perhaps largely because of his growing friendship with VIA missionary Geraldo Seke. Geraldo was even invited to preach in the Catholic church, and he preached his heart out. He held a two-week evangelistic series and thirteen people were baptized.



Thirteen people were baptised as a result of Geraldo’s evangelistic crusade in the Catholic village.

Geraldo noticed that the little thatched-roof house his friend the priest lived in was very old and broken in many places. He recognized his friend’s need and with the help of his new congregation, built a new timber and corrugated iron dwelling. Geraldo reports that this thoughtful gesture, “has cemented our relationship with the priest and his Catholic congregation.”



VIA Missionary Geraldo Seke with his growing Seventh-day Adventist congregation and church.



The priest’s new home under construction.

VIA Field Director's Report *by Dr Neil Watts*

Over the last six months it has been my privilege to visit with VIA workers in seven local missions in PNG as well as in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. I have been inspired by their stories of victories in spreading the Gospel, opening up new areas and planting new church groups. Their cheerful faithfulness and trust in the Lord despite the very real challenges they face and the sacrifices they make, is really humbling and heart-warming to me. Also, despite the problems they face financially and with their living conditions and often inadequate resources, they are truly grateful for the support of VIA and their personal sponsors and always ask me to pass on their heartfelt thanks.



During my recent visit in March to four local Missions in PNG, I came across a number of interesting stories and will mention just three of them.

STORY 1. While visiting Bougainville Mission I became very sick for two days with suspected food poisoning – but fortunately recovered enough to hopefully make myself useful! However, that is not the story I want to share. One of the VIAs I met for the first time was the former Bishop of the Uniting Church in Bougainville, Joseph Nope. This man was a highly recognised and respected person in all of Bougainville. A few years ago he began to study the Bible more diligently and became troubled about what he read about the Bible Sabbath. He began to share his discoveries with the members of his local church where he lived and eventually, he led his wife and several of his leaders to leave and become Adventists. It was big decision and a humbling experience for him, and he decided to enrol at Sonoma College to study Adventist beliefs more deeply. Part way through his first year he became quite ill and had to return home to regain his health. For more than six months now he has been a VIA before planning to go back to finish at Sonoma. In the meantime as a VIA worker he has been preaching to his former church members and told me that by the end of the year he expects that all of his local church members (and maybe even the church building itself), will be joined with our church. What an amazing story!



STORY 2. Last August I travelled to a number of places in the Western Highlands with Pr Jim Wagi,

the VIA Coordinator for the mission. One of the most distant places was Kiunga, not far from the border of West Papua, a province of Indonesia. While having meetings with the wonderful VIAs from the region I met two men who had special stories to tell. One older man who had only recently become an Adventist through the influence of another VIA, was a former life-long Roman Catholic priest and teacher.



He joined us to tell his story and to show his interest in helping our VIAs who are struggling to breakthrough in his remote home area very close to the border. He knows the people and their local language and now wants to go back to his place and help introduce them to Jesus and our Bible beliefs.

STORY 3. Also at Kiunga I was inspired by the story of one of the younger VIAs, Siro Waida who came from a criminal and drug using background and spent eleven years in prison for murder. During the latter part of his prison sentence, a church elder visited him and began Bible studies and he was baptised soon after. He then went for some Bible training and came back to become a VIA less than two years ago. He is an intelligent man and has a bright outgoing personality and is 'on fire' for the Lord and His work.



Although not about a VIA, I have one more story to share which has some similarities to the previous one. When I visited the VIAs and pastors in the Northern & Milne Bay Mission, I was not only happy and inspired by meeting the many VIA workers along with some full-time pastors, but also for the privilege of meeting and travelling with the Mission President, Pr Robert Nana. His story begins with him being part of a criminal and drug using gang who were notorious in the Port Moresby and Central Papua province. He and two of his brothers were chased by the police for a long time until finally the police shot and killed his brothers as they sat next to Robert while he was driving the escape car. He believes it was a miracle that the bullets just missed him. Unfortunately, he was accused as one of the killers and spent a number of years in prison. In prison he was given a Bible but tore out its pages to use for smoking.

He was finally released into five months of house detention and the only thing he had to read was a Bible. It changed his heart and he determined to go back to his home area and search for more

understanding. Even though his village was mostly controlled by another denomination, he was impressed to attend the small Adventist church in the area and eventually gave his heart to Jesus and was baptised. To cut a long story short, he eventually was able to get Bible training and later, his Bachelors and Masters degrees at Pacific Adventist University.

Today, Robert is a visionary and inspiring church leader. Robert is also a great supporter of our VIA workers and appreciates and encourages them in their work. He is an example of how God can dramatically change and use people who in our eyes may not be seen as ever being of use to the Lord's work.



To all our friends and sponsors, I can only thank you and encourage you to maintain your support because much of the baptisms and church growth in PNG and parts of the Pacific islands is the result of the faithful, self-sacrificing VIAs who are supported by you. Thank you again.

Drug Addicted to God Addicted

VIA Missionary Robinson Adilawa had seen this young man before. He was now kneeling quietly in front of the stage in Northern & Milne Bay Mission of PNG, where Robinson had been preaching his evangelistic meetings for several nights. The VIA missionary had been worried when he first saw him a few nights before; drunk, clutching a bottle of home-brew and obviously intoxicated with other drugs. Yet here he was, a completely changed young man! Clean, cleared-eyed and neatly dressed, his heart had been changed by God's grace and he was a new creature! He continued to attend the evangelistic meetings and surrendered himself to our loving Father. We praise God for His power to change lives.

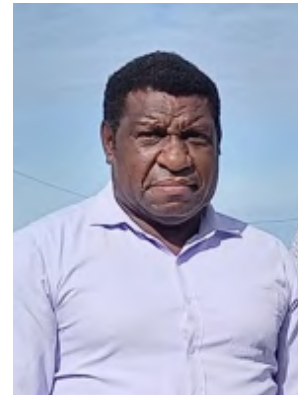
"There is a burden upon my soul in regard to the destitute mission fields. ... The Lord designs that the means entrusted to us shall be used in building up his kingdom. His goods are committed to his stewards, that they may be carefully traded upon, and bring back a revenue to him in the saving of souls unto eternal life. And these souls in their turn will become stewards of truth, to co-operate with the great firm in the interests of the kingdom of God."

Ellen G. White, *An Appeal for Missions* (pamphlet)

By the Grace of God: My VIA Journey

by Jeffrey Saigomi, Mission Secretary, Sepik Mission

My years of missionary and ministry experience all began with VIA and I write this testimony as a faith-filled encouragement to other VIA workers. In 2002 I attended Omaura Adventist School of Ministry to learn some of the basics of ministry. After successfully leaving Omaura, I was called by Morobe Mission to work as a volunteer missionary in Bibihil on the Morobe coast.



God has since used me in His service as a VIA in Wampup SDA Church in Erap, chaplain of Wawin National High School and zone pastor for 40 Mile churches along the Markham Valley. After completing my ministerial studies at Sonoma in 2007 I was called to be the church pastor and District Director for Kikori in the South West Papua Mission and was also given opportunity to serve as the Stewardship and Youth Ministries departmental director and to work with Adventist Frontier Missions.

In 2011 I got married to my wife who was a Secondary School teacher and I was called by the Chaplain of Nagum Adventist Secondary School in Sepik Mission. In 2012, I went to PAU to do a BA in Theology and was also working as assistant Chaplain of Mt. Diamond Adventist Secondary School. In 2015 I became chaplain at Nagum Adventist Secondary School where my wife was the school's Deputy Principal.

In 2020 we were called to serve as Sepik Mission Secretary and to work at Wewak Hill Headquarters. Whilst serving as the Mission Secretary I was also given the opportunity by the South Pacific Division and PNGUM to enroll in the SPD leadership development program and have graduated early this year 2023.

As I look back over this long ministry journey, I owe VIA so much for supporting me through the formative years of my ministry. I thank God for my sponsors in Australia for believing in the work of God in PNG. Your financial commitment and your prayers have really made a big difference.

For the VIAs out there, be faithful in doing the Lord's work and He will raise and bless you in your ministry in the years to come. God is always faithful when we are faithful and He will provide circumstances that will mould and shape us for future responsibility.

The Bathroom Miracle by Wilfred Nangu, VIA Co-ordinator, Sepik Mission, PNG

VIA missionary Michael Hula faithfully serves God in the mountainous area of Yangoru District of Sepik Mission, in East Sepik Province of PNG. In villages where Sunday worship is the tradition, SDAs are growing in number and there are preparations being made towards organising a local church. This is mainly due to Michael's faithful work in visiting and discipling. He is passionate about the salvation of the community he works in. Recently he was blessed to witness a miracle story which he shared with me.

Monica Paul had been in terrible pain and bedridden for a long time. Her digestive system was not functioning properly and she was unable to go to the toilet adequately. She was in desperate need of medical attention but there was none available locally and she was unable to travel to find it. Michael Hula heard about her urgent need and with his local elder, he paid a visit to her home early on Sabbath morning. As her anxious family quietly watched, the two men knelt down by her bed and prayed that God would bring her relief. As they finished their short prayer, Monica stood up and walked to the toilet. When she returned, the smile of relief on her face told everyone present that they had just witnessed a miracle!

And now because she felt God moving so powerfully in her life, she has joined 'class ready' and is having Bible studies. She, her husband and one of their sons are looking forward to being baptised together. Many others are interested to have Bible studies too and recently gathered together for a photo in front of a worship place that is being built. Praise God for the way He can use any part of our lives to draw us nearer to Him.



A new place of worship being erected in Monica Paul's village.

Mother Esther's Wish

In 2019, VIA missionary Lingskey Fimbore was called to serve along the border of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. He travelled to this often-volatile territory with his wife and four children, and served for nearly two years before meeting an elderly woman, Mother Esther. She and her husband Matthew became like family to Lingskey.

After several visits to their home, Mother Esther requested Bible studies. In Lingskey's own words, "She was very excited and happy to see me as a missionary serving God's purpose along the border." After that first Bible study, Lingskey and his wife visited Esther's home every Sabbath afternoon to share the truths of God's word. Gradually others began to join in the studies in Esther and Matthew's home, and one Sabbath Esther announced her wish to build a worship shelter so more people could gather with them and hear the Good News.



VIA Lingskey and Mother Esther in her home.

The next time Lingskey visited, Esther shared that she had arranged for a piece of land to be allocated to him, so the building could begin! Lingskey was thrilled for this opportunity, and soon after, made arrangements with local church youth to collect long, slim tree trunks from the nearby bush with which they built a simple frame. They created a waterproof roof with a large sheet of tarpaulin.

Not long after, Mother Esther became very sick and had to be sent far away for medical treatment. Sadly, they were unable to save her. What a blessing that she was able to see her wish for a simple church in her village of Mosso fulfilled before she fell asleep in Jesus. When Jesus returns, Mother Esther and Lingskey hope to hear those wonderful words, "Well done My good and faithful servants."



Mother Esther's dream for a worship place comes true.

Reconciliation Paves Way for 10,000 Toes

The *10,000 Toes* diabetes treatment and prevention program is having a huge impact on the health of so many individuals in the Pacific region, but there are some areas where their impact strategy has been unable to reach due to difficulties between the local SDA churches and other denominations.

VIA Missionary Graem Varane had been negotiating and waiting four long years and finally he received an invitation for representatives of the SDA church to meet with Zaira UCSI in remote SNG District of the Solomon Islands. He praised God for bringing this reconciliation together, and as he and the team travelled by boat and then foot, he continued praying that the Holy Spirit would be present at this important gathering. He said, "Every breath I took on my way to Zaira was a breath of prayer."



Zaira Community Church. (The reconciliation team also included: Minister Elvis Kuma, Minister Tanaka Belo, Pr. Hasla and Pr. Maebule Tekeni.)

The meetings were held at the Zaira Community Church, and Graem was invited to stay in the home of the UCSI Reverend. In his spiritual message to the Zaira community, the Reverend spoke about how important it was to acknowledge that even though a mess of misunderstandings had been created in the past, which many of those present were not responsible for, they all needed to unite in a willingness to clean up together and pray for God's Spirit of acceptance and peace.

Graem Varane spoke to all those present on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and presented a Marovo Bible to the Zaira Community Church, as a special token of peace. The meetings were concluded with a declaration of acceptance and everyone united in prayer, offering God their confessions and requesting His peace to work in each of their hearts.

The SDA team returned home praising God that now the important health intervention work of 10,000 Toes could go ahead in the Zaira Community and surrounding districts.

"Now I know Jesus as my Friend!"

Report from Mr. Win Myint, VIA in Myanmar

U Nay Win was raised as a traditional Christian in a loving Baptist family, but had never experienced a deep relationship with Jesus. He wasn't proud of the unhealthy choices he made when he was younger; drinking alcohol and smoking with his friends.

One day, VIA worker Win Myint visited him and invited U Nay Win to his church on the next Saturday. "I was interested in his preaching", says U Nay Win, "And all the church members received me in a very friendly manner."

After that, Win Myint came to his house each week and gave him a ride to the church worship program, then they would study the Bible together. "I delighted in their Sabbath program," says U Nay Win, "And from then on I attended with Mr. Win Myint every Sabbath". Mr Myint continued to give him weekly Bible studies in his home. "Finally, I gave my heart to God and received baptism on April 5th 2023," U Nay Win joyfully shares. "I am so happy to be a member of this new community."



U Nay Win (with blue shawl at centre) stands with VIA missionary Win Myint and his new church family.

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Post Cheques to: VIA, c/- Val Friend, 3 Friends Court, Yeppoon, QLD 4703

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Credit Card: Monthly, quarterly or half-yearly scheduled credit card payments. Please contact Val at the details below for a Payment Authorisation Form.

Need a Receipt? Please contact Jenni or Val.

THANK YOU!

To all our wonderful, dedicated, generous sponsors! THANK YOU! We hope you've been blessed while reading about the amazing ministry that your support makes possible. God is working through YOU!

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