



That They May Know YOU



"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3

The Newsletter of Pastor Larry and Tina Matro, serving in Papua New Guinea and Oceania

May 2017

The month of April flew by with the conclusion of Term 1 at Martin Luther Seminary, the arrival of new missionaries Martin and Marie Dicke, a visit from Chaplain Kolb and a quick trip to Ukarumpa to see some friends. You can see pictures and a report about these events on our blog: www.matropnglife.wordpress.com.

This month we want to tell you about **Pastor Simon Denis**, one of the many interesting people we have met and work with here in Papua New Guinea. Pastor Simon serves as the Circuit Pastor in the remote Wanakipa, Hewa area, where he oversees 17 congregations, 2500 Lutherans, 2 other pastors and 34 evangelists. (Larry was involved in the building of the airstrip at Wanakipa in the early 1990's, see picture.) Simon told Larry that he remembers seeing it built and dedicated when he was just a boy. Mission work in this area began in the 1970's. Simon's parents were baptized by a Lutheran missionary (Pastor Randy Benscoter) in the early 80's and he was baptized as a young child.



Simon is married to Rachel and they have three boys: Tom (born in 2008); Sepik (2012) and Ben (2015). He was married while on his vicarage and extended his vicarage an extra year so that he could strengthen his marriage. (We were happily surprised to learn this about him!) Rachel is originally from Wara Walu, also in the Hewa. He related that at one time there were no Christians there. But now there are 35 people there who believe in Jesus! An Aid Post was recently opened, which he built himself, that will bring some medical care to that very remote area. *When Larry interviewed him Rachel called Simon to ask when he was returning so that she could pray for him.*



He first attended Tok Pisin school in 1991 before going to Kopiago Bible School in 1995. After Bible School he went directly to Timothy Seminary and graduated in 2001. He first served as a pastor in the Wiski Circuit (also in the Hewa) for 5 years. He was later appointed Circuit Pastor in 2008.

Besides what is mentioned above, Simon is unique in many other ways. He is usually joyful, very sharp and articulate, easy going and not afraid to share his opinion, even with missionaries! He highly values education, which is relatively new to the remote Hewa people. There is a school at Wanakipa that Simon is attending as a 6th grader now. He is learning English because then he can read more books in order to understand the Bible better, which will help him to be a better pastor! Good Biblical resources in Tok Pisin, which is a common language here, are scarce. The LCMS and GLC would like an ordained missionary to come here to help them produce more books in Tok Pisin for use in their seminary and Bible Schools. *Anyone interested? Send me an email!*

Please pray for Pastor Simon as he 1) travels throughout the Hewa region (on foot) to visit and work with congregations, pastors, evangelists and 2 vicars from Timothy Seminary; 2) deals with a cult movement that has had some influence in his area. (Simon recently reported that the movement has lost some of its influence after a Bible study on Lutheran Beliefs was held, but it hasn't completely gone away.); and 3) ministers in a place where many face false accusations of being witches (*or sanguma*) and have their lives and the lives of their families endangered. The picture is of one of the ladies, and her child, who has been falsely accused. The accusations often come as a way of explaining and dealing with bad things that happen in the community. The accused person usually has to hide or run away and lives in constant fear of those looking to harm her/him. Some have been killed or committed suicide because of the stigma that comes with the accusations. *LCMS missionary Anton Lutz has been studying this for some time and has some intervention plans ready to be implemented.*



Thank you for your prayers, ***your words of encouragement and faithful and continuing support!*** We could not here without them. Please visit www.lcms.org/matro or www.missioncentral.us to learn how to support our work here in PNG.

We enjoy your email messages sent to: larry.matro@lcmsintl.org. God bless you! **Pastor Larry & Tina Matro**