



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

March 7 2009

PNG Newsletter

Number 1/09

Dear Friends,

It's nice to be able to say that things continue to prosper at Tatagufa. A number of folk who have left us in the past have returned, and there have been some new conversions over the past few months. There is a good sense of togetherness, and everyone seems to appreciate the teaching (we're currently working through Acts). Those coming along to the men's meeting seem thrilled at what is taught there - Romans truly is a great part of Scripture, isn't it? A couple of men who once were detractors of the Tatagufa church sat in on the men's meeting last week and later asked Iko if they could come along to church. We hope they do. The ladies are keen as ever for literacy with Beth. I suspect they enjoy the time together more than anything else. Jeve (from the village of Yafanagomo) has finally decided to join us at Tatagufa and seems to be settling in well enough. He's keen for his family to join him. It will take some time for them to see if he's going to stick it out before they will commit to following him.

As if to test the mettle of the newfound "prosperity", the Lord has brought some testing times to the Tatagufa church. Just this week the 12 month old child of a young woman, Sarah, who joined us last year, died. It was a particularly sad business as Sarah has been used and discarded by her husband, and used and discarded again by a succession of men, one of them being the father of the child. When you look in Sarah's eyes there is nothing there - it's as if she herself has died. Her smiles are forced and without warmth. Even in this culture where kinship is a time honoured tradition, Sarah seems to be without anyone to truly care for her. It gladdened our hearts when we heard that a number of the believing ladies of the congregation, on hearing of the child's death, went down to Sarah's village to be with her. Juan also went down and together with these believing ladies prayed for Sarah.

We were glad too when Sarah indicated that she wanted us (the Tatagufa church) to take care of the funeral arrangements. Nevertheless there was pressure from her step-father and wider family to have the child baptised before burial. Sounds strange to our ears, doesn't it? Religious superstition knows few bounds in Papua New Guinea; where the gospel is not believed anything will be believed. It was impressive that Oni and Juan spoke up and told the family that baptism of the dead was not the way, nor indeed is baptism of the living, and then proceeded to tell them about the faithful work of Jesus. Nevertheless, on the day of the funeral the issue was raised with me, and answers demanded. It was good to be able to show our solidarity by giving the same answer. When I preached, I spoke of how the work of the one man Jesus was all that was needed - what we do, be it baptism or communion or

keeping a Sabbath or being religious or any other kind of work does not save - only the work done by the Lord Jesus. We are expected to perform a host of rituals at funerals as the Lutheran and S.D.A. missions do. They are surprised when we tell them our trust is in what Jesus has done, not in anything else, and then they are equally surprised when we proceed to do nothing (other than to take the opportunity to speak the gospel to the living, and offer comfort when believers have died). They are not used to seeing people act on what they say they believe.

Sorcery killings seem to be getting out of hand. There have been two local ones in the past month or so. Radio Australia in their main news bulletin have reported a number of other sorcery killings in the Eastern Highlands over the past few months. There was nearly one at Tatagufa - a mob armed with machetes and M16 rifles came from Inivi to Tatagufa and took a Tatagufa man hostage for three days. They accused him of sorcery after an Inivi man died. They tortured the man to make him "confess", and did some "magic" things in an attempt to establish his guilt. After not getting the results they expected they let him go. This averted a wholesale tribal fight between Tatagufa and Inivi. However, there is much ill feeling in the general Tatagufa community against Inivi and if some sort of an apology or compensation is not forth coming there may yet be trouble. Thankfully, our men at church have been downplaying the whole thing seeking to ease the tensions, and so far they seem to have succeeded.

Since beginning this letter there has been another death at Tatagufa - Juan's mother - she died in her sleep on Friday morning. We know her quite well, although she only attended the Tatagufa church occasionally. While she formally belongs to the Lutheran mission, Juan would like us to take care of the funeral arrangements, asking me to preach to the gathered community on the day of the burial. We are glad to do this, for Juan's sake, to stand together as God's redeemed people, and also for the opportunity to proclaim the gospel. It's noteworthy that at least a couple of the believing men have rallied to be a good support to Juan thus far.

As you can see, the Lord is providing many opportunities for the church to prove the veracity of their gospel claims. Pray they may continue to be found faithful as no doubt there will be many more difficult "opportunities" in the days and weeks ahead.

Preparations are well in hand for our departure for a short furlough and then our long service leave beginning in mid May. Adam Collison (now Alice's fiancé) completed the



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printing and binding of the 1 & 2 Timothy Study books which the two congregations will use for the main teaching part of their Sunday meetings together while we are away. He also was able to do a couple of other printing jobs for us; a revision of our hymn book, and 8 copies of my New Testament translation (which at the moment includes the books of Mark, Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon). We are always glad when more people want to read the Scriptures for themselves. Some of those requesting the New Testament book are from Beth's literacy group. One lady who can't read and probably will never master literacy, bought a copy for her husband - maybe she means for him to read it to her - that would be a good outcome for both.

We were greatly surprised one Sunday morning when Leften came forward and contributed some money towards "the work of the Lord", as he put it. He said he wanted to give the first-fruits of a meat-bird enterprise he has just got going. We do so hope this is a genuine expression of gratitude to the Lord for his salvation and for the ministry of the gospel he has received over the years. Recently Leften expressed his concern that we would be away for so long. However, when I showed him the study book I had prepared for them, and showed him how I envisioned it to work, he was very pleased and thankful for the effort made on their behalf. Over the past while we have been concerned about the church at Avili, that little is changing there. Maybe we've misjudged them, and more is going on than we thought. Lets hope so and pray that it is so.

Beth has had her hands full with doing literacy classes at Tatagufa and attending to people who come to the house each day asking for medical help. Some days there have been between 20 and 40 people, ranging from headaches, joint aches, etc., to severe burns, to more critical medical problems way beyond Beth's abilities - these she refers on to medical facilities in Goroka or Kainantu. The burns victims need daily attention, sometimes for weeks, if the parents stick it out - many times they don't and just leave the child in his agony. Of course, medical work is not by any means the main game - the proclamation of the gospel is that. However, as believers, we look for opportunities to show kindness and mercy, opportunities which assist and support our gospel witness, not work against it, as some things do. Providing some medical helps also assists in maintaining our residency in the Kanite and that in itself is good for the ongoing gospel work here.

Well, it won't be too long until we see you all face to face. We are looking forward to that. We are also looking forward to seeing those friends in Northern Ireland who have received these letters for the past 20 years, who have prayed along with us for the success of the wonderful gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Kanite, as part of the gathering of his people from the four corners of the earth, to the glory of God.

With all our love,
Glenn and Beth

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