Nambawan! **Global Mission's** Vanuatu Newsletter





PCANZ Moderator the Right Rev. Rose Luxford with guests from the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu at the 2023 General Assembly: General Secretary Rev. Collin Keleb, Onesua College Principal Mrs Rossie Caleb, and Mrs. Roslyn Keleb.

Following a lack of activity as a result of the impact of Covid-19, it has been good to see the PCANZ's Global Mission partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu become more active again in 2023. This year has seen the resumption of programmes that had begun prior to 2020, the renewing of projects that had stalled, and the beginning of new connections as travel and communications picked up again. This year we have seen the hosting of several personnel from the PCV including school chaplains to a church schools conference; a youth leader to Connect, and senior PCV leaders at the PCANZ General Assembly. Church schools projects have also resumed, some congregational teams are exploring options, and we have an English teacher confirmed for Talua Theological Training Institute in 2024. While this has all been positive, Vanuatu continues to suffer from damaging cyclones, with three Category 4 or higher cyclones hitting the nation hard in 2023 alone. While the Vanuatu people are known for their resilience, the debilitating impact of these cyclones cannot be ignored. Read on for more information ...



PCV Chaplains Attend Presbyterian Schools and Chaplains Conferences

Global Mission hosted two PCV school chaplains at church schools conferences in Wellington in August. Their week long visit included two conferences – the first was the combined church schools chaplains conference, which was held at various venues in Wellington; the second was the Presbyterian Schools Conference held at St. Orans College in Lower Hutt. Pastor Shem Tamara, chaplain at Onesua College, and Pastor Joseph Kalpin, chaplain at Lenakel College on Tanna Island attended. While the weather was challenging and the context of their schools is very different from that in New Zealand, they both benefitted from attending. Their experience will help them provide leadership at an inaugural chaplains training event in Vanuatu next year, at which PCANZ chaplains have been invited to contribute.



Above — Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu chaplains Pastors Shem Tamara and Joseph Kalpin at the Presbyterian Schools Conference at St. Orans College in Lower Hutt; and at the historic Presbyterian Church landmark in Petone.

PCV Youth Leader Hosted at Connect

Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu youth leader Manle Simeon was in New Zealand for 10 days in early September. The main purpose of the visit was to attend the Connect national youth leaders conference in Auckland on September 1-3. During his visit Manle was hosted by members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Henderson, and Northern Presbytery Youth Worker Masele Bakulich-Tufeao. Thanks to everyone who offered accommodation, transport and hospitality and helped to make Manle's visit a success. We hope to continue building the relationship between the national youth ministries of our two churches.



Manle Simeon at Connect with Simon Parkes. Simon lived in Vanuatu when his parents were on staff at Talua Theological Training institute

English Teacher at Talua Theological Training institute

Global Mission has been supporting Brianna Snowdon from Australia at Talua Theological Training Institute this year. Brianna responded to the position when no one from the PCANZ was available. She has done a great job and has been well supported by her brother Elisha who has also been living on site and volunteering as a language learning support worker. Brianna and Elisha live in Heniko House, which is funded by Global Mission. We have a PCANZ English teacher ready to fill the role next year – Jae Ahn from the Korean Presbyterian Church of Auckland has responded to a sense of call and will serve at Talua in 2024. Please pray for Jae Ahn as he applies for his visa and begins his preparations.





Above Left: Phil King with Brianna Snowdon outside Heniko House at Talua Theological training Institute. Right: Jae Ahn who will be the PCANZ-supported English teacher at Talua in 2024.

Bislama Bibles for Correctional Services Chaplaincy

Prison Chaplaincy is extremely thankful for the Bislama Bibles for the men in our care. I recall a man who was a prisoner (I will call him Adam) in the facility where I work who was from Vanuatu. He spoke very little English at all and being a seasonal worker, was really struggling with many things, let alone the ability to communicate in a strange country and culture and with virtually no language.

There have been a series of God-ordained connections over about 10 months which would not have come about without "Adam" being in our Corrections system and here where I work. At the time I had no Bislama at all in my resource cupboard, but one day I was picking up some rubbish in a corner of the building, getting ready to drop it in the



Rae Wilson , Chaplain – Otago Corrections Facility

bin...when I saw a fairly untidy looking book that someone had covered with an old blue plastic bag. I picked it up intending to put it in the bin; but felt a bit of a check to remove the cover and have a look at what it was.

Praise the Lord, it was a Bislama New Testament with the Psalms and Proverbs. I can't describe the feeling I had – this was a miracle, as I had wanted to be able to give this man something that would bring him comfort, especially something from his homeland and it was almost Christmas.

When I gave this book to "Adam" it brought tears to his eyes and then of course tears to me as well, seeing how moved he was. His stay with Corrections had renewed his faith in his Lord and Saviour and he was praying for his whole family back home for salvation in earnest.

I am now happy to say I have four Bislama Bibles occupying a special place in my resource cupboard. Every time I enter, I am reminded of the blessing that came with them and also preceded them. We were also blessed to have another eight Bislama Bibles shared amongst other prisons around New Zealand. Thank you Phil King and Global Mission for your part in all of this, along with Geoff Skilton of Dunedin.

Global Mission recently donated 12 Bibles in the Bislama language to support prison chaplains in their pastoral care to seasonal workers from Vanuatu who end up in prison.

Visit to Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu General Assembly in August

Members of the PCANZ were able to attend the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu General Assembly this year for the first time since 2019. The assembly as held on the Island of Malo, to the south of Espiritu Santo. The PCV assembly takes place alongside their Presbyterian Womens meeting, and huge numbers attend making the assembly a massive event. It requires a very organised logistical effort from the assembly planning team and the hosting community. The village of Avunatari, and the entire community on Malo Island made a great job of hosting the assembly which catered for nearly a thousand people. Global Mission Director Phil King was accompanied by Moderator Hamish Galloway and two members from the Hawea and Wanaka congregations, Rev. Aaron Johnstone and Joanne Foster. Aaron and Jo were exploring opportunities for their churches to participate in our partnership with the PCV and they returned with many ideas to share with their congregations. Prior to the Assembly, Hamish and Phil visited Onesua Presbyterian College while Aaron and Jo were hosted by members of a church on Moso Island, off the coast of Efate. Then the whole team made a brief visit to Talua Theological Training Institute before travelling to the assembly venue with staff and students from Talua. This made for an interesting and stimulating visit with plenty of opportunity for thoughtful discussion and discernment on how to develop and strengthen our partnership with the PCV.











Travelling to PCV assemblies is a lot more fun than travelling to PCANZ assemblies! Above, the PCANZ team travelled by ute and then in boats to reach Avunatari village on Malo Island. The assembly always begins with a parade, where all the Presbyteries dress in their respective colours. The PCANZ team: Moderator Rev. Hamish Galloway, Global Mission Director Phil King, (then Rev. Rob Falls, Australian lecturer at Talua), Joanne Foster, Rev. Aaron Johnstone. Left: Hamish Galloway cuts the Assembly celebratory cake at the opening.

A Tale of Three Cyclones – Judy, Kevin and Lola

Vanuatu has been hit hard with three cyclones in this calendar year. Due to the widespread nature of the country the various regions experience different levels of impact with each cyclone. The twin cyclones Judy and Kevin which came within days of each other in March hit the central islands and Efate quite hard—grateful thanks are extended to people who donated in support of the PCV after Cyclones Judy and Kevin. The more recent Cyclone Lola was stronger in the north. The regularity and ferocity of these cyclones is a concerning trend; and it is alarming that Cyclone Lola has come so early in the usual cyclone season, apparently caused in part by warmer sea temperatures. News about Cyclone Lola's impact on Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu people and property has been slow to arrive but we recently heard from the PCV General Secretary Collin Keleb (who was a guest at our General Assembly) who had this to say about his home island of Malekula:

"My house was a semi-permanent building and it was blown down, and I lost many of my books and other home utensils and other things. I normally use all these mentioned during long holidays, but my parents were using my home for accommodating visitors and the church representatives who would normally travel across to my area and were caught up when the Pankumo River was high during the bad weather. Many families in my village lost their local homes and gardens.

My people were evacuated to our church building. Most of the buildings destroyed by cyclones are usually those facing the north - but on this occasion Cyclone Lola came from the south and the village was not prepared for the unusual direction that Lola came from – it came from an east and south-easterly direction and hit the southeast part of Malekula island, with Category 4 and 5 wind-strength.

All houses (local and permanent) couldn't stand the strong wind by Lola. Our forest, farm, gardens and fruit trees were totally destroyed. We lost livestock, cash crops like coconut and cocoa plantations, etc.

The Vanuatu Prime Minister declared a state of emergency to the areas that are most hit by the cyclone, and my people are on the list inside the state of emergency areas.

The PCV is calling on all clerks who are within the State of Emergency areas to utilise all Church Disaster Committees, to work closely with the chiefs and the Government disaster team so they can update us with reports that we will rely on so we can provide help."

We are waiting for further updates but any donations received for Cyclone Lola relief will be passed on to the PCV.

There have been reports of two deaths, on Ambrym Island. A Radio New Zealand interview on October 31 about the damage on Pentecost Island was insightful, and this can be listened to here, https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/programmes/ datelinepacific/audio/2018913230/cyclone-lola-claims-two-lives-in-vanuatu



PCANZ General Assembly 2023

The third event where we hosted members from Vanuatu this year was the PCANZ General Assembly at St. Kentigern College, Auckland from September 27 – October 1. The PCV General Secretary Rev. Collin Keleb was accompanied by his wife Roslyne, and Onesua College Principal Rossie Caleb. They all contributed well and it was encouraging to see the level of engagement from commissioners with these guests during their time at the Assembly.

A positive aspect of their visit was a meeting with St. Kentigern College staff which laid a foundation for St. Kentigern to reestablish a relationship with Onesua College. Previous contact had been lost and as a result of this meeting, plans are being made for St. Kentigern College students to take part in a service programme in Vanuatu next year. It was encouraging to see the level of commitment St. Kentigern has to its Presbyterian roots, and to learn of their desire to develop a stronger connection with Presbyterian schools in Vanuatu. Here are some photos from their visit.



Above: Global Mission Director Phil King with CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr. Jooseop Keum, Rev. Collin Keleb, Roslyne Keleb, and Rossie Caleb at the PCANZ General Assembly; St. Kentigern College staff Duncan McQueen and Mark Robinson renewed the college's connection with Onesua Presbyterian College.

Below: Catching the erratic sun at the assembly during a lunch break: on a tour of St. Kentigern College; at the Sky Tower; and visiting Vanuatu RSE workers after the assembly. Collin Keleb is President of the Vanuatu Council of Churches and so was able to bring greetings from to the RSE workers in that capacity, representing all the churches in Vanuatu.



St. Kentigern School Service Programme

In September this year St. Kentigern School resumed service projects with Presbyterian schools in Vanuatu. This involved two teams of Year 8 students, parents and staff taking part in two week-long projects during the school holidays. These projects had lain dormant since 2019 due to Covid-19, so the resumption of these service programmes after four years is a great testimony to the commitment of the St. Kentigerns staff and parents. They had to deal with changes to their plans due to flight disruptions and their full schedule meant they were busy all the time, but they managed to complete their projects as planned. This involved contributing at three PCV primary schools close to Port Vila – Etas, Macses and Popowoh. They constructed and repaired playgrounds, did some cyclone repairs, built a basketball half court and new pathway, painted school buildings and also donated clothes, uniforms and sports equipment. Their contributions have been greatly appreciated by these schools and left an indelible mark on everyone who took part. A report on the impact of their service programme summarised it this way: "Vanuatu is a very special place; we took home with us some incredible shared experiences that will stay with our students, parents and staff for life."











In these photos: The container of goods is unloaded ready for action; a new swingset at Etas school; construction of a basketball half court, and St. Kentigern chaplain Rev. Reuben Hardie tries his hand on the finished product; the refreshed playground at the Etas preschool; and students happy with their new uniforms.



Community Support Continues on Paama

Rev. Geoff Skilton of Dunedin has had a long-term connection with the church and community on Paama Island, which began when he was minister at Highgate Church and chaplain at Columba College. Geoff has continued to visit Paama and returned earlier this year with some volunteers to help in the school library and some other projects. Below, Geoff summarises what they achieved on their visit and muses on future possibilities:

Reading, what a life changing skill. But who takes books home from the library to read when your first language is Paamese, and your second is Bislama, and English is your third, and the books are almost all in English! Imagine if next time you visited the library the books were all in a third language, with one or two in English.

A week before travelling the list of what we could do shortened dramatically. The repairs to the shutters on the boys' dormitory disappeared off the list as did a number of other tasks for which materials were not available. What remained? The invitation to work in the library. Principal Richard said that was where we could focus our energy. He had a computer on which he wanted the books catalogued. So, we set about our work.

While helping at the school was the primary task, there was a deeper reason for travelling. COVID had disrupted the pattern of sending a team every two years. Also, Highgate At Ten and B@tCH had changed. The former congregation closed in December 2022. The questions were, "Was this where God would have us serve at this time?" "Was our time up?" The three of us who travelled think not. Time will tell as we put together one or more teams to travel in 2024.

The invitation when we left mid-July was to help make bricks for a new classroom, to come alongside a class of pupils to assist with reading, and to explore what it would take to set up a computer pod in the library to give children an introduction to computers during the day, and maybe their parents in the evening.

With Cyclone Lola tracking over Paama in late October the invitation of what we might partner with may have changed. In July, the people of Paama were still recovering from cyclones Judy and Kevin which passed over Paama in March. Relief aid was distributed while we were there. The weekly market was almost void of produce. The recovering gardens are once again devastated. Water is contaminated. The roof of the Medical Centre no longer exists *(see this photo on page 5)*. Perhaps we will be asked to pick up the hammers in July 2024.



Shane cataloguing books in the Vaum school library; and Geoff Skilton being a reading buddy with a Year 8 student

Thank you to everyone who financially supports our partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. Donations are always welcome and allow us to achieve more. Online donations can be made to 02 0500 0086963 10. If making a new donation please send an email with contact details for receipts to katrina@presbyterian.org.nz

Nambawan! is dedicated to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand's partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. "Nambawan" is Bislama (one of the three official languages of Vanuatu) and means "Number One" or as we might say today, "Awesome!" If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or would prefer email, please advise by return mail to Global Mission, P.O. Box 9049 Wellington 6141, or email Phil King at phil@presbyterian.org.nz.



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