

January 2026

# MISSIONS

**Philippines**  
**Former Missionaries**  
**Return to the**  
**Archipelago**

**Ireland**  
**Heralds for Christ**  
**in the Town Square**

**Papua New Guinea**  
**Cultivating Christian Writers**

**New!** **CMML Introduces**  
**Its Missions Podcast**



# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY JOHN PEASLAND

## Declaring God's Glory in 10/40 Africa

Two years ago, CMML launched a renewed emphasis on the unfinished task—a call for the body of Christ to reengage in the mission that began with the risen Lord's command to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations."<sup>1</sup> Through our publications, conferences, and digital communication, we've sought to place before God's people the reality of the 10/40 Window, the vast band of nations stretching from West Africa to East Asia where most of the world's unreached people live.

Since then, assemblies across North America have responded. Some believers have gone; others have sent, supported, and prayed. Through it all, we thank the Lord that His Spirit continues to stir hearts to join Him in His redeeming work—building His church from every tribe and tongue.

Yet, as we lift our eyes to the fields, we are reminded that the work is not finished. Yes, churches exist, missionaries and nationals proclaim Christ, and the light of the Gospel shines brightly in many places that were once dark. But those born into unreached people groups far outnumber those born into communities with access to the Gospel.

Since last year's *Missionary Prayer Handbook* was printed, the number of unreached people has grown by another 170 million. Today, 3.57 billion souls remain without adequate access to the message of salvation. These numbers are not merely statistics; they are men, women, and children for whom Christ died. The apostle Paul expressed his passion for reaching the unreached when he wrote, "And so I have made it my aim to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named."<sup>2</sup> That holy ambition should define the church today.

This year, CMML is continuing its journey through the 10/40 Window, with our focus shifting to the parts of North Africa that fall within that window. From Morocco's Atlantic coast to Libya's deserts and from Algeria's rugged mountains to Egypt's Nile valley, hundreds of millions live with little or no gospel witness.

North Africa was once home to vibrant centers of early Christianity. Great teachers such as Augustine of Hippo and Tertul-

lian lived and ministered there. But, over the centuries, the light dimmed. Today, many people across these lands have never met a follower of Jesus or heard the Gospel presented clearly.

The challenges are real: linguistic barriers, cultural complexities, and political restrictions. Yet, as Paul declared from prison, "The Word of God is not chained."<sup>3</sup> Quietly and courageously, God's servants continue to labor in these lands, sowing seed, building relationships, and sharing hope through word and deed. Their perseverance reminds us that missions is measured not by speed but by faithfulness. Paul exhorted the Corinthians:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

The 2026 *Missionary Prayer Handbook* highlights 31 people groups in North Africa. We invite you to pray for them—by name. Pray that God will open doors, soften hearts, and raise up more

laborers for this harvest field. And consider: What is my role in this Great Commission? The Lord still asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"<sup>5</sup> Whether through going, sending, giving, or interceding, every believer has a part in God's plan. Jesus's words remain true: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."<sup>6</sup>

The day is coming when the unfinished task will be complete—when John's vision in Revelation will be fulfilled: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."<sup>7</sup> Until that glorious day, may we, His church, labor faithfully to see His name proclaimed where He is not yet known. May North Africa's deserts, mountains, and cities soon echo with new songs of praise to the Lamb who was slain. And may each of us, His ambassadors, embrace the great privilege and responsibility entrusted to us: to make Him known to the ends of the earth until He comes. ■

*John Peasland, CMML executive director*

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19; <sup>2</sup> Romans 15:20; <sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 2:9; <sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58; <sup>5</sup> Isaiah 6:8; <sup>6</sup> Matthew 9:37–38; <sup>7</sup> Revelation 7:9.

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COVER PHOTO: Palawan, Philippines—Photo by Philip Parsons



# SWITCHING HATS



## FORMER MISSIONARIES REVISIT THE PHILIPPINES IN A NEW ROLE

BY PHILIP & MARY PARSONS

Following World War II, soldiers who had fought in the Philippines now recognized the country as a mission field “white for harvest.” (John 4:35) Many of these military veterans, along with other believers, answered the call to serve there. By the mid-1950s, missionary parents began to wrestle with how to best educate their children. They sought the counsel of pioneer missionaries Cyril and Anna Brooks (CMML), who had served in the Philippines since 1923. The result was Faith Academy, which opened its doors in 1957 to educate missionary children.

In 1985, we were commended to the ministry of missionary kids’ education, specifically serving at Faith Academy in Manila. Our initial term of service at the school was two years. I taught industrial arts, while Mary used her nursing expertise within the school and throughout the missionary community. The Lord graciously allowed us to extend that term for another 18 years.

In 2006, at the invitation of the CMML directors, we began hosting missionaries at the CMML Missionary Guest Home in Wall Township, New Jersey. Now, we are privileged to serve as part of the organization’s missionary care team. Forty years after our initial call and commendation to the Philippines, the Lord led us back in a new role: missionary care.

### What is missionary care?

Missionary care at CMML began informally over a decade ago when Mary and I were invited to participate in a missions conference in Bolivia. It seemed reasonable that while there, we should make personal visits to the CMML missionaries serving in that country. The then CMML president, Robert Dadd, embraced the idea. We contacted the missionaries serving

throughout Bolivia and were warmly welcomed. Seeing and experiencing their life provided us with fresh insights and helped us better understand how CMML could encourage them.

For the next 10 years, we continued to visit missionaries around the world alongside our responsibilities in the guest home. The CMML directors have since expanded missionary care to include three couples who visit missionaries on the field, as well as communicate with and pray for them. During our visits, we see some of the workers’ ministries, hear about their joys and concerns, and most importantly, encourage them through prayer.

Because of our experience in the Philippines, Mary and I were excited and blessed to return and visit most of the CMML missionaries serving there. Our journey took about 18 hours, with delays and tight connections threatening our plans. Thankfully, the airlines ensured we arrived in Manila safely.

### Strengthening relationships



Each October, the assembly-commended workers gather for the Christian Missions in the Philippine Islands (CMPI) retreat, a time of fellowship and spiritual refreshment. It provided an ideal

opportunity for us to meet with some CMML missionaries and extend care and encouragement.

Top: (back row, L-R) Clara Jarvis (MPH Day 7), Heidi Eichenauer, Miriam and Todd Eichenauer, Graeme Fleming (New Zealand), Mary and Phil Parsons; (front row, L-R) Ruth and David Harvey, Judy and Marlon Govender (Emmaus Worldwide), Jerry Uy, Yolly and Tim Stafford. Above right: The CMPI retreat took place on the island of Luzon.



Mary and I were met at the airport by Jerry Uy (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 8), who transported us to the retreat. The long drive provided many hours of conversation with Jerry, who shared about the blessings in his ministry. We had first met Jerry years ago when he visited his sister, a Faith Academy employee. That brief encounter led him to pursue teaching at the school. In 2012, God honored his desire. Jerry left secular employment in the US and began serving the Lord through teaching, Bible studies, evangelism, and preaching in local assemblies. Now, he has built a home equipped to be a guest house for Christian workers.



It was a delight to reconnect with David and Ruth Harvey (MPH Day 7), who have served in the Philippines for about 56 years. Ruth began at Faith Academy as a biology teacher. Later, she met and married David, who was, at the time, a recently commended missionary from the assemblies in New Zealand. (Years later, in my role as high school principal at Faith Academy, I contacted Ruth when the school needed a biology teacher!) Today, the Harveys serve among three assemblies in Metro Manila. David is active on the boards of CMPI and the Children's Education Assistance Foundation (CEAF), the legal entity that owns Faith Academy and other Christian education ministries. They also oversee three Christian elementary schools connected with the assemblies.



We also spent time with Todd and Miriam Eichenauer (MPH Day 7), who serve full-time at Faith Academy. Todd began in vocal music but now focuses on partnership development. Miriam teaches English and Bible in the middle school. Todd speaks regularly at an assembly near their home and helps with its connected elementary school.

Tim and Yolly Stafford (MPH Day 8) also attended the retreat. They are transitioning from active service in South Korea to a new ministry in the Philippines. The retreat gave them valuable time to connect with fellow workers as they prepare to begin a new chapter in Nueva Ecija.

During meals and other informal times, Mary and I listened to these missionaries' stories, encouraged them in their ministries, shared CMML updates, reviewed their responsibilities,

and answered their questions. These conversations strengthened our relationship and reassured the workers that they have someone who listens to, cares for, communicates with, and prays for them regularly.



### Island hopping

The Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands. Most CMML workers serve on Luzon, the largest and most populous island, and the CMPI retreat took place there. After, we traveled to two other islands: Palawan and Mindanao.



First, we flew to Palawan. Craig Sutherland (MPH Day 8) met us at the Puerto Princesa airport, and after a four-hour drive south, we arrived at his home in Brooke's Point. His parents, Alex ("Sandy") and Maisie Sutherland,

pioneered the work in Palawan, starting in 1935 (commended from Scotland and later the US). Craig and Margaret focus on meeting both the spiritual and practical needs of the Indigenous Palawano people. The completion of a Bible translation in the Palawano language, under Craig's direction, has enabled more effective teaching of God's Word.

Craig gave us a tour of Brooke's Point, even showing us the assembly camp where Christian training occurs several times per year. The local Christian



**Left (from top):** The Parsons share a meal with Jerry Uy and other believers; Todd Eichenauer leads the retreat's singing. **Right (from top):** Mary enjoys Philippine desserts—ube ice cream and cake; The Philippine archipelago comprises 7,000 islands; The Sutherlands (right) greet Phil and Mary; Craig Sutherland offers Mary a ride in a motorbike taxi.

school has enjoyed a long and fruitful ministry, though finding qualified teachers has become increasingly difficult as other schools offer higher salaries.



We joined the believers at the assembly for a family fellowship on Friday evening, and on Sunday, we experienced one of the highlights of our visit: a service at Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm, a large penal colony about 100 miles from Brooke's Point. We departed at 4:00 a.m. to ensure an early arrival. Craig had secured clearances for us and several church members. More than 100 prisoners gathered for three hours of singing, testimonies, Scripture recitations, a message, and remembering the Lord. We also witnessed the baptism of 12 men. What a joy!



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**Left (from top):** In Palawan, a street teems with people and shops; The Brooke's Point assembly gathers for a Friday night family fellowship; Phil and Craig speak during a service at the Iwahig prison; A man is baptized in Iwahig—one of 12 that day. **Right:** Roger McElhiney shows the Parsons his classroom.

Our final stop was a visit with Roger McElhiney (MPH Day 8) in Davao City, on the island of Mindanao. Roger teaches full-time at Faith International Academy. Following early retirement—and with encouragement from Steve and Dottie St. Clair, longtime CMML missionaries in Davao—Roger was commended to the education of missionary children and began preparing to work alongside the St. Clairs. The Lord called Steve home before Roger arrived, and Dottie went to be with the Lord just three days after Roger's arrival in Davao. Before her passing, Dottie shared valuable details about the ministry, particularly at Bible Fellowship Davao, one of the local assemblies.



Roger lives within walking distance of the school. He teaches high school math and science, coaches, and supervises after-school activities. As the Lord enables, he mentors young believers at Bible Fellowship Davao. During our visit, the assembly hosted a meal for Filipino elders from several Luzon assemblies. They had come for a men's conference and to encourage believers in several rural churches. Some of these men had sung in the choir we directed 40 years ago; it was deeply moving to see them now serving as leaders in the Philippine assemblies. To God be the glory!

### Will you pray?

Our CMML missionaries are greatly encouraged when believers remember them before the Lord. Please join us in praying.

- David and Ruth Harvey – Pray as they hand over leadership responsibilities to younger believers who will continue the work with boldness and integrity.
- Todd and Miriam Eichenauer – Pray that, by modeling lives empowered by the Holy Spirit, they will continue to inspire and guide missionary kids in their spiritual walk.
- Jerry Uy – Pray for his continued physical well-being. He praises God for many open doors to share the Gospel in his community.
- Tim and Yolly Stafford – Pray for wisdom and guidance as they begin a ministry in Nueva Ecija, Yolly's hometown.
- Craig and Margaret Sutherland – Pray for their growing relationship with the spiritual director of the Iwahig prison; it could open further ministry opportunities. Pray also for the urgent need for teachers at the Christian school in Brooke's Point.
- Roger McElhiney – Pray for wisdom to balance his time as he serves in the activities of Faith International Academy and Bible Fellowship Davao. ■

*Philip and Mary Parsons, CMML missionary care*

# Ask a Missionary

Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

## QUESTION: Do you have a hobby that you use in your ministry?

### BRAZIL

Jeanne Lipsi



Yes, I do. I enjoy walking; it's a great way to informally evangelize, counsel, review a Bible study, or even pray if on a quiet trail.

### ROMANIA

George Murray



I worked at a maximum-security mental institution before moving to Romania. It was a very stressful job, so I used my spare time to work with my hands. I repaired and painted cars, worked around the house, and dabbled in construction. I arrived in Romania in 1991, unsure of God's specific calling but with a desire to spread the Gospel and see people come to Christ, be disciplined, and fellowship in a spiritual community.

Over the years, I have learned that as we teach the Word of God, it is often necessary to help a new believer know how to glorify God through practical living. I am not an expert in construction, but with the experience I had before moving to Romania and my desire to learn and help others, I have taught it to several generations of young people. Many have chosen construction as their career, and a few even started their own handyman businesses.

I've found that one of the best ways to disciple is to do something together, as it gives the opportunity to truly get to know the other person. At our camps, I worked with two inexperienced workers for about two years. Eventually, they became open to devotions; then, we did a study together on Christian basics; and now, they're committed to the Lord. I still work with one of them, and we meet for devotions every morning. Working alongside people gives me more open doors to sharing the Gospel than anything else.

It's not necessary to have a specific skill, but if you offer all of whom and what you are to the Lord, He will find ways to use whatever talents you have. Gather all the experiences you can when you are young and, as you walk through life, keep your eyes open to the needs around you.

### ECUADOR

Taylor Hollingsworth



Math is my hobby. I enjoy numbers and always have. I use this enjoyment to help neighborhood kids with their math; we work together at one of the empty tables in our Christian library. Also, I work with couples to build responsible financial habits. Such practical, even technical, discussions often lead to deeper conversations about life, God, and eternity.

### COLOMBIA

Carlos & Anna Grace Cruz



We enjoy soccer. Carlos plays once a week, which has helped him meet people. As a result, he has formed a good friendship with a neighbor and has had several gospel-oriented conversations with him.

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### JAPAN (REFOCUSED)

Peter Clift

I have been a piano accompanist since elementary school, both in my home assembly and at Bible camp. This skill was a huge help in the founding of two new assemblies in Japan, as well as at camps and big meetings. Occasionally, I would also put on a concert of classical and sacred music.

# JAPAN

Bob Longo



Yes, I enjoy bird-watching. I emphasize two things: 1) There are always birds around; numerous species can be seen even in urban areas. The Lord's blessings are always around, even in the "duller" parts of life. 2) Eurasian tree sparrows (same family as house sparrows) have always been around and been quite dependable. But, now, they have seriously declined in parts of Japan where they were once common, if not abundant. We must not take ordinary, common blessings (good health, a good budget, and good friends, for example) for granted; we never know when they may disappear.

# CMML MISSIONARY CARE

Sharon Fleming



I used to do counted cross-stitch every chance I got. When I was serving in Colombia, I created many cross-stitch designs with verses in Spanish and put together kits, each containing fabric, thread, a needle, and a pattern. I sold them for a very nominal cost so the women could have the Bible on the walls of their homes. Whenever I return, even after 17 years since leaving Colombia, I see these verses on the walls of some of the homes!

**ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!** Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](https://www.cmml.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!

## SEEKING THE LORD TOGETHER

### CMML's Virtual Prayer Meetings



Back in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in stay-at-home orders, CMML participated virtually in the North American Week of Prayer, hosting prayer sessions for men and women via Zoom. The interest in those meetings led us to launch Pray with CMML, a prayer session from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. (EST) on the second and fourth Fridays of every month. We began hosting two Zoom meetings: one for men and one for women, each led by CMML staff. Participants pray for current needs, including the Lord's work around the world and global events.

Some of the participants are believers from local assemblies in North America; others are missionaries serving worldwide. Some stay for the entire two hours; others drop in for a portion of the time. Each one's presence contributes to a rich time of prayer. "It was a delight and pleasure," one missionary said of a CMML prayer meeting, "to be in the company, even via Zoom, of so many of those who have placed their trust in the Word of God. It was inspiring to share with them in the work of the Lord in so many places around the world."

If you're interested in praying with us, please visit [CMML.us/pray](https://www.cmml.us/pray) to register and receive the Zoom meeting ID and password. "It is time to seek the Lord." (Hosea 10:12) ■



# Stories from the Ends of

A NEW PODCAST CAPTURES MISSIONARIES' EXPERIENCES

BY JOEL HERNANDEZ & JOHN PEASLAND



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**From top:** Joanna Brainard, with her husband, Ezra, beside her, responds to a question; Jonathan and April Hayes present stories from Africa; (L-R) Aaron Fullan hosts with support from Joel Hernandez, the podcast's producer.

“When this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.” (Colossians 4:16 ESV) The apostle Paul was more than a preacher; he was a master communicator. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he not only spoke God’s truth wherever he traveled, but he also used the “technology” of his day: the written letter. With pen and parchment, Paul ensured that God’s Word reached far beyond one congregation, spreading encouragement and instruction across the Mediterranean world.

The Lord has continued to use various forms of communication to share His mission. In the late 1900s, countless missionary biographies inspired believers in the US. Churches were stirred when missionaries returned home recounting God’s faithfulness, provision, and grace. These stories became a vital way for Christians to see how the Lord was moving globally.

## New expressions of unchanging priorities

At CMML, our mission is to advance the spread of the Gospel globally, primarily by supporting US assemblies in their missions efforts. This support takes various forms. The most well-known is providing services to missionaries commended from local congregations. Another way is missions-focused communication with the assemblies, which centers around a few priorities:

1. Engaging in prayer – Prayer is of utmost importance. The *Missionary Prayer Handbook* reminds us to intercede daily for those serving around the world. As Hudson Taylor once said, “You must go forward on your knees.” Every great missions movement of God has started—and persisted—through prayer.
2. Sharing the story – Through *Missions* magazine, conferences, and gatherings, we share testimonies of the Gospel’s progress. Thereby, we motivate believers of all ages to participate in God’s work.
3. Encouraging sacrificial giving – We are privileged to witness believers generously giving to God’s work. CMML carefully passes these gifts to missionaries without retaining any amount for our operational costs. We thank the Lord for those who help us cover our expenses as we serve.
4. Challenging to go – Beyond praying and giving, we encourage local churches to send workers, guided by the Spirit, into the harvest field. The need remains great, and Christ’s commission, urgent.

5. Reaching the unengaged – We desire to help believers less involved in missions see what God is doing worldwide. We invite them to join His mission.

Over the years, we've expanded into new platforms—social media, videos, and digital storytelling—to wholly connect with a new generation while still serving those already engaged. Now, we're excited to share missionary stories in a fresh way that we'll introduce in a moment. First, we must answer the question, *Why missionary stories?*

### Stories ignite passion

Stories are powerful. They spark our imagination and move our hearts, challenging and reshaping our values inexorably. When a lawyer asked Jesus who his neighbor was, Jesus didn't launch into a three-part sermon; He told a story (Luke 10:25–37). Anyone can sleep through a sermon, but few can shrug off the implications embedded in a story, especially a missions story.

Missions stories tell of a world beyond our daily experience, of Christ's power to transform lives, of spiritual warfare, of answered prayer, of the amazing things God can do through a believer who, like Jacob of old, lays hands on God and won't let go. We're not trying to paint missionaries as superheroes; they are as ordinary and vulnerable as the rest of us. Yet they have a front-row seat in God's work around the world.

### Drum roll, please

We at CMML can hardly contain our excitement! We are pleased to introduce our podcast appropriately named *To the Ends of the Earth*—a new effort to capture and preserve missions stories. The podcast will consist of interviews with missionaries to tease out their stories.

This modern tool, the podcast, has become a powerful means of reaching audiences. In 2025, Edison Research reported that 55 percent of Americans ages 12 and up listen to or watch a podcast monthly.<sup>1</sup> This consumption is exploding globally, making podcasts one of the fastest-growing media platforms.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, two-thirds of all 12- to 34-year-olds consume podcasts.<sup>3</sup> Young generations, especially teens, are eager to engage with meaningful causes, and we know of none more meaningful than God's mission.<sup>4</sup>

Our podcast has three objectives: First, we wish to continue capturing the stories and missions thinking that are part of our CMML family and identity. *Missions* magazine has published

such content for the last 54 years. Building on that, we now add audio and video podcasting. Second, we aim to raise the profile of the New Testament missions model. For over 100 years, CMML has practiced it; we love its simplicity, adaptability, and enormous potential. Third, we desire to encourage all believers to become missional Christians and so cultivate the next generation of missionaries, sending churches, and supporters. *To The Ends of The Earth* is an invitation to journey beyond our routine and see God at work in every nation. Our tagline, "Stories that invite us to lift up our eyes" (an allusion to John 4:35), reminds us to look up and see fields ready for harvesting. We pray that all assemblies and all believers will become active, fervent participants in advancing the spread of the Gospel globally, whether through going, giving, or praying.

### Season one and beyond

Season one will consist of six episodes released semimonthly from January to March. If you think such a season is too short, fear not. We plan to roll out two seasons per year.

This first season will include interviews with Herma Bode (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 2), Ezra and Joanna Brainard (Day 19), Jonathan and April H. (Day 2), Kevin and Amy Schiltz (Day 30), and John Peasland. While chatting with our podcast's host, Aaron Fullan, they took us to countries ranging from Brazil to Senegal and shared stories of how the Lord led them to unimagined opportunities, through great dangers, and out of personal failure. We trust you'll find the host and missionaries engaging storytellers and their accounts inspiring.

The first episode of season one is ready for you to enjoy! Scan the QR code to listen on your favorite podcast app or to watch on YouTube. Please listen, like, and subscribe. We think you'll love the stories, but beware: they will change you as they ignite a passion for missions within you. ■



*Joel Hernandez is the CMML vice president, communication.*

*John Peasland is the CMML executive director.*

<sup>1</sup> *The Infinite Dial 2025*, Edison Research, released as a webinar on March 20, 2025, [www.EdisonResearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/The-Infinite-Dial-2025-Presentation.pdf](http://www.EdisonResearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/The-Infinite-Dial-2025-Presentation.pdf). <sup>2</sup> *The Podcast Consumer 2025*, Edison Research, released as a webinar on July 23, 2025, citing from Edison Research *Share of Ear*, [www.EdisonResearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-Podcast-Consumer-2025-revised-FINAL.pdf](http://www.EdisonResearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-Podcast-Consumer-2025-revised-FINAL.pdf). <sup>3</sup> *The Infinite Dial 2025*. <sup>4</sup> "Open to Impact," vol. 3 of *The Open Generation: A Global Teens Study*, Barna, [www.Barna.com/the-open-generation/open-to-impact/](http://www.Barna.com/the-open-generation/open-to-impact/).



# Honing the Craft in Papua New Guinea

CHRISTIAN BOOKS MELANESIA  
IDENTIFIES AND STRENGTHENS  
CHRISTIAN WRITERS

BY REGGIE HOWARD

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a most remarkable nation. It is home to over 800 tribes, 800 languages, and 800 cultures—each with their own histories, mindsets, and value systems. PNG is located just north of Australia and shares the Island of New Guinea with Indonesia. It fills the eastern section, complete with sweltering jungles, vast wetlands, endless forests, and mountain peaks soaring above 15,000 feet. I was privileged to arrive here 43 years ago, when the nation was celebrating its seventh anniversary of independence.

The work God did to bring assembly missionaries to PNG was notable, beginning well before the nation's independence. Around 1950, He called Gerald and Betty Wunsch from the US, Roy and Nancye Austin from Australia, and Kay Liddle from New Zealand—all unknown to each other—to serve him in this nation. They met in the town of Wewak and realized that the Lord was calling them to work together to reach PNG with the Gospel.

Also noteworthy was the unplanned development of a trade language, Tok Pisin, in the late 19th century. It helped unify and develop PNG. It is still used throughout most of the country; however, English is taught in the schools and is being used more and more.

## Training readers and writers

Our Lord impressed upon the early Brethren missionaries the need and opportunity to produce Christian literature in Tok Pisin and English. In 1969, they registered Christian Books Melanesia (CBM) as a nonprofit organization. Since the beginning, it has published and distributed sound Christian literature. Today,

it also operates five retail stores that sell all our books, other literature, and stationery. It is a diverse, multifaceted ministry with an impact around the country. And the Lord has used it in extraordinary ways.

Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have learned to read and write through CBM's literacy program. Missionaries trained Papua New Guineans to be literacy teachers and provided the books, paper, and pencils they would need to teach others. All these years later, the teaching materials remain in use around the country. The teachers are all national men and women.



The early missionaries also wrote basic Bible commentaries and study books in Tok Pisin; thousands of people have used them. Today, CBM publishes books about many topics, including marriage and family life. Missionaries have written almost all of them, but CBM has been working on developing Papua New Guinean men and women as authors.

## Fine-tuning ideas and manuscripts

CBM has run a couple of writers' competitions to identify Papua New Guineans to train as authors. We started this event in 2008 and resumed it in 2025. The competitions were

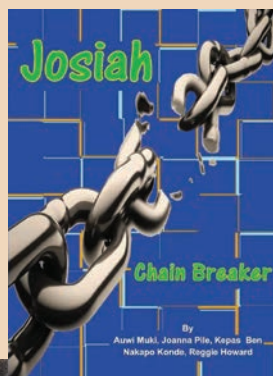
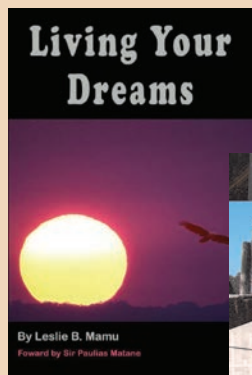
Above (L-R): Women train to be literacy teachers; Students learn to read and write.

advertised through nationwide newspapers. We gave the participants about nine months to write a manuscript in English, and we offered prize money to the winners. The results have been exciting: we had nearly 100 entries the first time and 30 more recently.

Once the competition has identified men and women with the desire and ability to write Christian literature, we then invite them to a week of intensive training. Typically, they are eager to learn. During the 2025 training, the writers stayed engaged from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and grew significantly in their understanding and ability to write well. Teaching them was a tremendous joy. Some entries were nearly ready for printing; with just some editing and proofreading during the training week, they were published several months later and will be available soon.

Two of the books that have come out of these efforts are *Groping for God* by Matupit Darius and *Living Your Dreams* by Leslie B. Mamu. They are unique in content and presentation—written by Papua New Guineans for Papua New Guineans.

CBM has also hosted an advanced writers' training program. We gathered for a full week. Books on *Josiah* and *Onesimus* were written as group efforts. We researched, discussed, prayed, and worked together. On the first day, I started as the discussion leader, but as we got into gear, the writers didn't need my leadership. I was busy as a scribe, writing down their insights. These books were truly collaborative efforts from beginning to end. Each author listed had meaningful contributions. The results were *Josiah: Chain Breaker* and *Onesimus—Transformed*. They are available worldwide as e-books. By googling the titles, anyone can download them and give them a read.



### Praising the Lord amid challenges

A tragic fire struck Christian Books Melanesia's head office in 2025. An electrical fault caused it during working hours. No one was badly injured, but the fire destroyed the whole building and its contents. We store the books elsewhere, so they were not damaged. We are picking up the pieces and continuing this needed ministry of book publishing and distribution.

Christian Books Melanesia is going through some major transitions. The fire was a blow, but while we have the resources to continue the ministry, we need prayer. Before the disaster, we

had started looking for someone to replace CBM's general manager, who is retiring. The need is urgent. Please pray that God will provide the right person.

We praise the Lord for this opportunity to use Christian literature to reach Papua New Guinea and Melanesia with the Gospel. It is clear to us that God has blessed PNG's people with good communication skills. Papua New Guineans tend to be very people focused. When they write, they meaningfully address real-life issues. We marvel over the talent God has given these men and women and their eagerness to use it for Him. ■



Reggie and Susan Howard are commended from Des Moines Gospel Chapel in Des Moines, Washington.

“The writers didn't need my leadership. I was busy as a scribe, writing down their insights.”



Above: (left) The writers' competition has produced several books, including *Living Your Dreams*; (right, top and bottom) The advanced writing program resulted in books on *Josiah* and *Onesimus*.