

#28, Apr 2020

The Journey of Hanna Joy

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Hello All,

I have long thought that Easter Saturday, that day of expectant waiting yet oh-so-ordinary life, is a summary of much of Christian life. We know Christ has won the victory over death, but we wait for his coming again, all the while getting on with a life lived in faith to the best of our Spirit-aided ability.

This year though, it is Holy week, this time between Palm Sunday and Easter, that resonates with me. As a culture we have been living in the victory of Palm Sunday, by our decades of comfort, wealth and security, but now we are staring at dramatic change and impending death. The death will hopefully not be of any of our loved ones, but the restrictions we are living with, the loss of jobs, the cancellation of much of life, the limitations on visiting friends and giving them a hug, is a form of death. We're told that in the future things will return to normal, that there will be a resurrection. This will have to be a new normal, after what we have been through, but that day seems impossibly far away at the moment. For now it is Holy Week, and death is what we can see.

I encourage you to hold on to hope in this time. Easter will come, life will win.

I also encourage you to prayerfully allow yourself to enter into the doubts that times like this bring.

Joan Chittister put it well when she said,

"Without doubt, life would simply be a series of packaged assumptions, none of them tested, and all of them belonging not to us, but to someone else whose truth we have made our own. ... Doubt... is the mother of conviction ... It is doubt that is the beginning of real faith."

Now is a good time to test your assumptions, to be convicted by faith. It is a good time to follow the model of the Psalms, and lament your losses, confusion, doubt and grief before God. It is a good time to immerse yourself in God's word, and to read it with the eyes of someone who is struggling. So much of the Bible was written to people struggling with occupation, exile, persecution and unknowns. It speaks to us today.

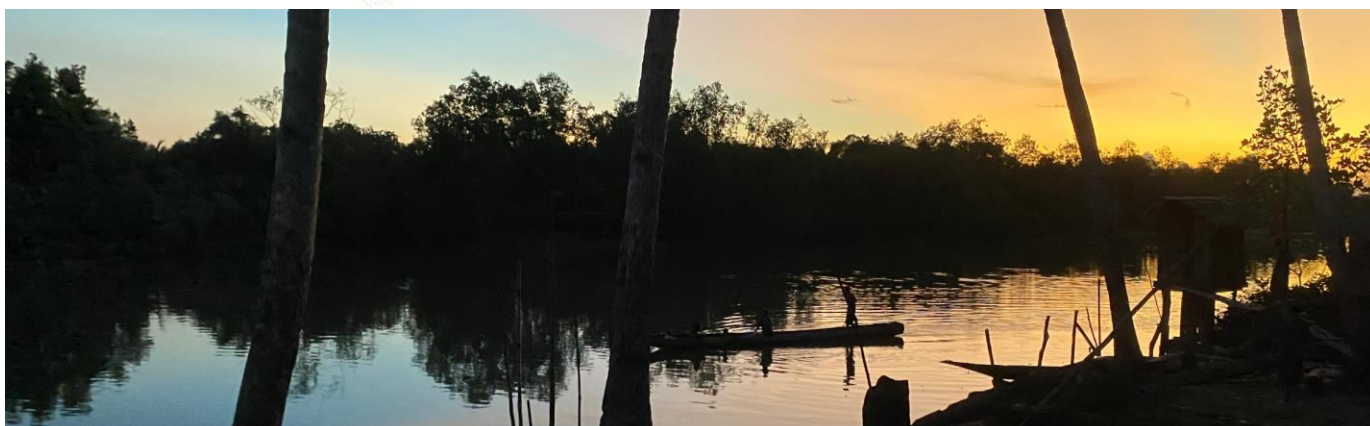
My prayer is that you will find comfort and security in the God who is Immanuel, who is with us in all things, and who loves you enough to die for you, and to gift new life to you, both now and always.

Blessings,

Hanna

Quote from: Chittister, C & Williams, R (2010) *Uncommon Gratitude: Alleluia for all that is*, p14-15.

Photo: Alyssa Tomalino, Ubua sunset





The new roof on my Ubuo house. No more rain inside the house!!



I gave away about 2000 small literacy books to schools, and sold about 200 more, for 20t (10c) each



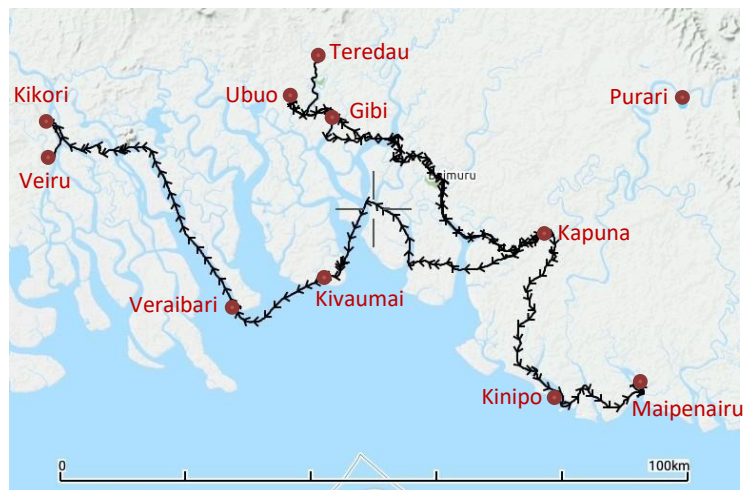
Recording Anigibi worship songs in Wiatari village (between Teredau and Ubuo)

Staying in PNG

Those of you who receive my prayer updates, or who are friends with me on facebook would have already received the news that I am remaining in PNG at this time. As the Covid-19 situation has unfolded rapidly around all of us, I have had to decide if I wish to remain in PNG at this time, or return to Australia. It was not an easy decision, but one made prayerfully, by consulting trusted people, and by weighing up the known risks and benefits.

Around me, friends and colleagues have been facing the same decision. Many have scattered across the world to their passport countries, and many have stayed here. Read [this blog](#) for a sense of how hard the choice has been for all of us. It has been a tumultuous time for our community, as it has for many. Pray for our leadership as they continue to guide us at this time.

While remaining in Ukarumpa, I have plenty of computer based work to continue with: dictionary, literacy materials, grammar paper, social organisation paper... and more!



During my seven week in Gulf, we drove my dinghy about 440km, this is the track chart from my travels. Purari is the airstrip I arrived at, a Kapuna boat picked me up from there, and I forgot to record the track.

Village Trip

On January 20, I returned to Gulf for my most recent village trip. I was only three weeks in Ubuo village, a time that went quickly. While we did achieve some translation drafting and checking, we also spent time recording worship songs, distributed literacy books, put a new tin roof on my house, and worked through some significant issues among the translation team. These issues have been building for a few years, and although we have been trying to address them on the way, they came to a head in January and February. Working through interpersonal issues is hard at the best of times, but even harder cross culturally, and my three weeks in Ubuo were emotionally exhausting as I prayerfully worked things through with the team. I was most thankful that Robbie and Debbie Petterson, NZ colleagues with a long relationship to the people I work with, were able to come and help with the conversations and changes. To work together as the body of Christ, and to not carry this burden on my own, was an enormous blessing to me. I think the changes we made were good, but ask that you keep the Kope translation team, and the work they are doing, in your prayers.

Raunraun, OBS and Plans

I say 'raunraun' (to go around and around), others might say walk-about, but as no walking, only boating, was involved, I prefer the first term!

The second half of my Gulf time was raunrauning with Robbie and Debbie Petterson, and Alyssa Tomalino for the Scripture Use (SU) department. There were multiple purposes for our travel. Robbie was checking in with vernacular literacy teachers that he has been training, we all helped complete a village check of the I'ai Jesus Film, and Alyssa and I were doing an SU survey to get an idea of strengths and challenges in the local church, and how that might inform what SU workshops we plan in the future. We were also gauging interest in Oral Bible Storying (OBS). This is an alternative, oral only, form of Bible translation.



Doing our Scripture Use survey in Maipenairu (photo: Robbie Petterson)

Those of you who have heard me present about the area where I work, will know that I work in an area with many languages, and few Bible translations. While Robbie and Debbie have been working on the Jesus Film and literacy in several of these languages, they are transitioning into retirement, and handing the baton to me. My hope is that we could reach out to many of these languages to offer Bible translation. From what I had heard from others using OBS, it seemed a good place to start. After our raunraun and survey, I can say it *is* a fitting place for us to start, and that there is a local need and desire for Scripture in their own languages.

The plan is that in the next year or two, we will start a cluster project (multiple languages in the one project) using OBS. To get there from here is an intimidating prospect. Please join me in praying for OBS trainers to be available, for a project manager to help with all the paperwork and communications required, for a funding body to take on supporting this project, for mentors to be willing to work in the area, and for all the pieces that need to come together before I can invite local language communities to participate in this project.



Relaxing the in boat while waiting to leave. Don't worry, I wear my lifejacket when we're underway (photo: Alyssa Tomalino)

Training Centre!

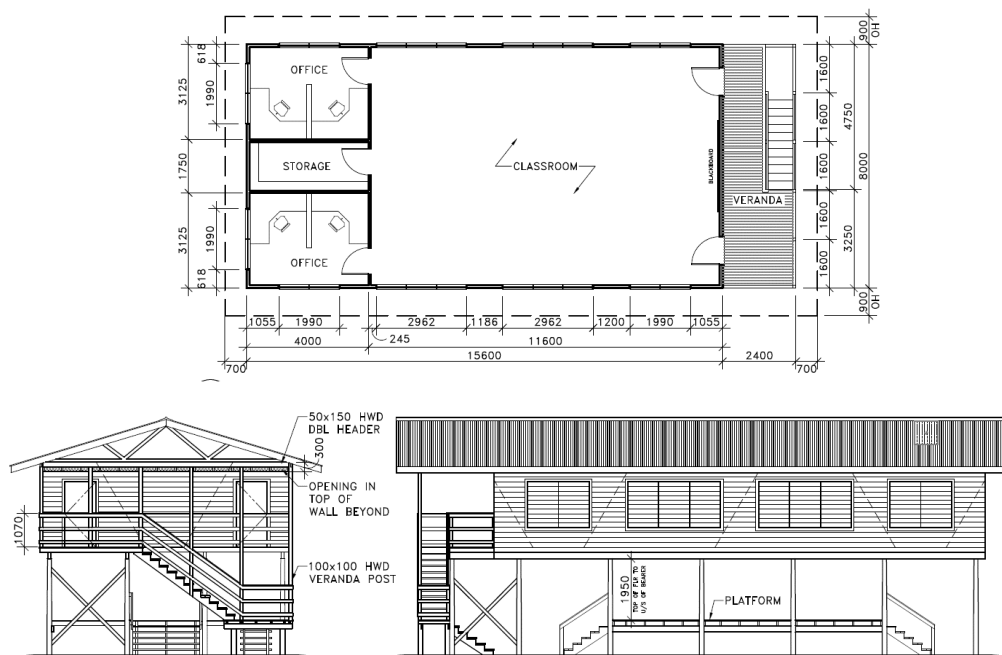
For five years, we have used the verandah of my Ubuo village house to do our translation work. When we have hosted workshops, we have used the church building. Now, we are working towards having our own space for continuing the Kope translation and literacy work, hosting more workshops (with themes informed by the survey Alyssa and I just completed), and starting an OBS project for languages across the delta area.

The plans have been made, as has a budget, and a project plan has been approved, all we need now is the money! Please pray about if this is something that you would like to support financially.

We are building a training centre in a remote location, so it is an expensive project. It is also one which I hope bears fruit for generations, as we train local Christians and church leaders to better understand God's word in their heart languages, and in their hearts. They will then be better equipped to lead their church communities to grow in God.

I know that launching a fundraising campaign in a time when the world is speaking of economic recession, or even of depression, may seem crazy. In recent months I have been increasingly convicted of the need for this kind of training in my area, and to keep stepping forward in faith, even when it all seems too much. Covid is not the first thing to make me want to throw away the plans, but I keep being encouraged to go forward in faith, and so I do. While my plan is for us to do the building in late October into November, I know that the timing is in God's hands.

To give to this project, please contact finance@wycliffe.org.au and let them know that your gift is for **Ubuo Training Centre PNG**. Thank you in advance, for helping the Christians of the Gulf Delta to grow in their understanding of God and his Word.



Details from the plans for our training centre in Ubuo

Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.

Luke 23:34

Dates

March 10: returned to Ukarumpa

April 20-24: Executive Committee (EC) of SIL PNG meetings

Unknown: return to Gulf Province

Prayer Points

Pray for the **Kope translation team**: that they may work together well, that the changes we made will be positive, and that those who are struggling, will be encouraged in their faith.

Pray for plans for an **Oral Bible Storying (OBS) cluster project in Gulf Delta**; that plans, personnel and finances may all come together.

Pray for plans for the **Ubuo Translation and Training Centre**; that the finances, resources and timing may come together, and that I may be at peace with all the details I need to manage.

For the **people of PNG**, as they face the prospect of Covid-19. In a country with a struggling health system, this virus is a very real threat. Pray that people will be kept safe, that hospitals and staff will cope well, and that people will not live in fear because of the rumours they hear about the virus.

For our **Ukarumpa community**, as we adapt to our new normal of self-distancing. We are also greatly limiting our travel in country, to ensure we do not spread the virus. This means I do not know when I will next be able to go to the village. Pray for me to focus on all the computer based tasks that I now have unexpected time to work on.



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