

# Symmonds' Soundbites

## News from Papua New Guinea

Symmonds' in Papua New Guinea News Letter No.18, April 2024



We trust you had an enjoyable Easter. We had lovely long weekend with our friends and colleagues here on the MAF compound and appreciated the opportunity to remember the death and resurrection of our saviour.

The last few months have been a little quieter than previous, thankfully, without so much of the unrest we wrote about last time! We hope this latest letter will bring you up to date...

### **MAF Ministry Highlights Solar Power System to Pyarulama**

Christian Radio Missionary Fellowship has been working in PNG for many years. This organisation provides vital radio systems to remote bush communities, and in more recent years, IT and internet services and support, as well as solar power systems. CRMF had a long standing relationship with Mission Aviation Fellowship, and eventually CRMF was rebranded as MAF Technologies. There is a desire for the aviation and technologies divisions to work more closely and effectively together, and some of the fruits of this were seen in a flight to Pyarulama, in Enga province. Andy delivered a solar power system, including panels, batteries, inverters and wiring, along with the MAF Tech installation team, to this remote community, where the system would be installed at the medical clinic to provide vital power for lights and fridges. The ability to work in the clinic after dark for emergencies, power to charge devices, and having fridges to keep medicines and vaccines cool, will make a huge difference to the staff and patients who work at and rely on this aid post.



*MAF Goroka base and MAF Tech teams loading the solar power system into the Caravan. Solar panels wrapped in protective black covering.*



*Unloading building materials for the construction of teachers' houses at Wuyabo.*

## Enabling Community Development

Another staple of MAF activities is the transport of building materials. Among the loads of such cargo in recent months was this batch of roofing iron and cement for the building of teachers' houses at Wuyabo. The community are extending and improving their school and MAF provides a practical means of transporting the required hardware.

As the similarities between the two photographs in this section suggest, the practicalities of loading, flying and unloading are often pretty routine, but each load of cargo and/or passengers tells its own unique story.

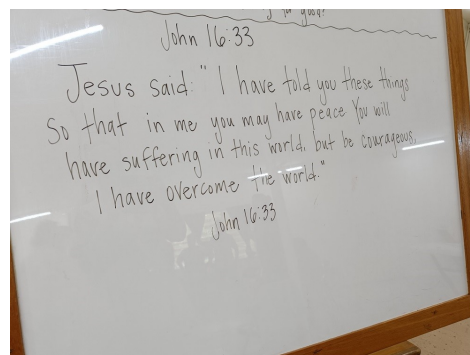
## Single Engine Instrument Flight Rules Update

In February Andy completed the Line Oriented Flying Training section of SEIFR. He is now approved to operate MAF C208 Garmin G1000 equipped aircraft in Instrument Meteorological Conditions. This means flying in cloud, rain and poor visibility by sole reference to the aircraft instruments and not to the outside world. Although rural airstrips do not have instrument approach procedures, so the take off and landing phases of flights to these locations must still be carried out visually, holding this authorisation has already enabled Andy to complete flights which would have been much more challenging or even impossible if limited to Visual Flight Rules. As the last few program pilots go through the SEIFR training, give thanks that this will enable MAF PNG operations to be safer and more efficient.

## Trauma Healing Course

Last time we reported that Helen had completed the course to qualify her to train others to deliver the Oral Based Trauma Healing course and she and Harriette were hoping to run this course for people at the New Tribes Mission base at Lapilo. Give thanks to God that the complex logistics of this came together and the course was a big success. Harriette was able to get MAF flights to and from Mount Hagen at suitable times, enough people signed up to make the costs viable, facilities and food were provided at Lapilo and the internet connection was stable enough to allow Jen to join via Zoom from Alotau (Gulf Province). As this was the first time Helen and Harriette had run the training course, Jen fulfilled the role of mentor, who was able to debrief after each session and approve Helen and Harriette to run this course independently in the future.

The course was very well received by the eleven participants and many are keen to take the material out to the remote communities they have relationships with. Many people have experienced real trauma in this culture and this course enables people to begin to process it in the light of God's amazing forgiveness, grace and care.



*Some photos from the trauma healing training course*

## **Fuel Shortage**

Those who are part of churches and prayer groups that request updates from us between our newsletters will be aware that a few weeks ago MAF PNG was faced with the very real possibility of having no fuel for our aircraft. Puma PNG is the only provider of JET A1 aviation fuel in the country. Over the last couple of years or so the supply has shown occasional instability. The reasons for this are apparently complex, involving Puma, the banks, government, and difficulty securing foreign exchange for buying fuel outside the country. There were numerous periods when Puma were not able to supply us, but only for a day or two, and our stocks of drums comfortably bridged the gap. Recently, however, Puma stopped for a number of weeks with no date of recommencement given. We had to rely entirely on drum stocks and if we had kept flying at our usual capacity these would have been exhausted within a month. To prolong operations, we drastically cut back on flying for a period, concentrating only on highest priority loadings (missions, medevacs, etc) and ordered a supply of drums from New Zealand. This fuel is far more expensive, once shipping and import costs are considered, so it is not a long term solution. Road traffic was also affected, but there are other, smaller suppliers of petrol and diesel, so although there were temporary shortages and long queues at the pumps on occasion, the country did not grind to a halt, as had been feared. Praise God that, a couple of weeks ago, Puma started to deliver aviation fuel again. Our supplies are back to normal and our flight program has fully resumed. Please pray that there will be a lasting solution to this issue so that our service to the remote communities of PNG can continue uninterrupted.

## **Another Airstrip Restoration**

Last time we wrote about the restoration and reopening of Fiyak airstrip in Sandaun province. Shortly after sending out that letter, Andy had the further privilege of flying into Auwi for the official reopening of this restored strip in Hela province. The airstrip at Auwi had been closed to MAF operations for many years due its poor state of repair and lack of surface strength. The community were keen to reopen it, as although there is a road link to larger towns, the road is often in poor condition and is considered dangerous to travel due to raskol (bandit) activity. A major restoration of the airstrip was carried out with funding from local government. The Rural Airstrip Agency (RAA) was also involved and carried out the final assessment before the go ahead was given to resume MAF operations.

Andy and representatives from RAA attended the official reopening ceremony and were invited to share a few words with the gathered crowd. It was very encouraging to see how pleased and excited the community were to have a reliable means of transport in and out of the area. This will provide supplies for the medical clinic and schools; transport for teachers and medics; and enable church leaders to attend conferences and local officials to visit and govern more effectively.

Please continue to pray that restoration efforts will be effective and focussed on the strips which will be of most benefit to the surrounding communities.



*Left: RAA's Jonny Watson with a young celebrant at the the Auwi airstrip reopening*

*Centre: Jonny readying the drone, for recording imagery of the airstrip, surrounded by the community*

*Right: Drone picture of Auwi airstrip*

## Let's hear it for the Boys!

Joel and Daniel are doing well. They continue to engage well at school and deepen friendships.

We celebrated Daniel's 9th birthday early in April with a party at the compound. It was great to be able to invite new school friends. This week (15th - 19th April) the boys are both doing standardised testing at school. This does not impact their grades, but gives the school a helpful indication of where everyone stands. Never the less, it is hard work for the students. Please pray all will do their best.

As is the nature of life on the overseas mission field, new people arrive and friends leave on a regular basis. Two families whose boys are close friends of Joel's and Daniel's will return to their home countries this summer. Please pray for their resettlement, and for Dan and Joel as they lose some good friends.

Thank you once again for your interest in the work of MAF in Papua New Guinea. We very much appreciate your support and prayers. As always, if you have time to get in touch personally, please drop us an email. Love from Andy, Helen, Joel and Daniel



*Joel as Winston Churchill for a school book report presentation*

## Please Pray:

**Give Thanks** For the work MAF is able to do helping and supporting remote communities. For new and reopened airstrips.

For the successful trauma healing training course. For Andy's obtaining of MAF SEIFR authorisation. That the fuel issues are resolved.

### Pray For

Our continued health and well-being.

Families leaving PNG and the loss of friendships.

Prison and Mama Care ministries.

Trauma healing course and material to continue to have positive impact. RAA and efforts to restore and maintain the rural airstrips of PNG.

A new Country Director for MAF PNG. Pray the right person will soon be appointed to this critical role.

MAF PNG's ministry to continue to have lasting Kingdom impact.