

Ever Widening Circles ed. A.Leadley

EVER WIDENING CIRCLES

Stories of some influential Methodist leaders
in Solomon Islands and Bougainville/Buka

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Plaque on small Island (Nusa Zonga) in Roviana Lagoon where John F. Goldie and others commenced their work.

Readers please note that text quotations are shown in italics.

Preface

It is a privilege to edit this collection of stories about leaders in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville/Buka churches. Together the stories speak about the movement of God's Spirit in the hearts and lives of people who changed the history of the Region. They are stories of ordinary people with extraordinary courage and faith; people who continued to love and make peace in the face of opposition and war.

These are only a few of the people who have helped to shape the Methodist/United Church in the area. Selection of the stories which are included in this publication was limited by the access to living memories or archival material. I hope that these stories are new and fresh to readers, using material not previously published or available.

The memorial plaque on Nusa Zonga reminds us that many faithful witnesses from New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, United Kingdom, Canada, Solomons and Papua New Guinea

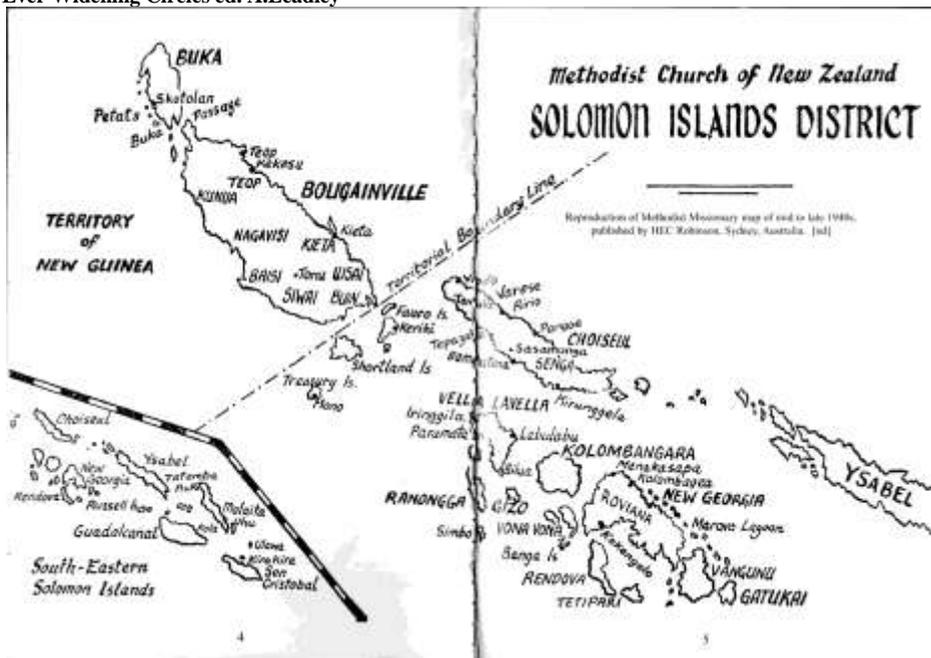
used their gifts to help God's light shine in this land, and have passed the torch on to those who continue God's work.

These are ordinary men and women transformed by the extraordinary love of God. They shared their lives with strangers; some travelled to the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and elsewhere to share the Good News of Jesus the Christ. They passed on their faith to their children and grand-children so that second and third generations in their families continued to tell and live the Gospel Story. This is why we have entitled the booklet Ever Widening Circles. The faith and light of God known to us in Jesus has been passed on by these disciples of Christ to many others, just as a stone in a pond creates ripples of ever widening circles.

In editing these stories I have tried to keep the essential style and content of each contributor. Thanks to the Rev. Phil. Taylor, Convenor of the Committee working on this project. Thanks also to Catherine Dickie who patiently typed the text, and to Ngaire Silvester, Hazel Simpkin and others in the Auckland Methodist Archives who helped locate the illustrations.

May this booklet be a worthy tribute to all those whose faithful Christian witness is commemorated at the Centenary of the Solomon Islands Church.

Alan Leadley February 2002



The Ripples of Evangelism

IN the late nineteenth century ships were recruiting labourers for the sugar plantations in Fiji and Queensland. To a young person this prospect of travel and adventure was very appealing. One such young man was Sam Aqarao from the village of Talisi on Guadalcanal. Once he reached Fiji he found opportunities beyond being a labourer. He was able to go to school and learn the basics of reading and writing and also gain knowledge about the Christian faith. This equated in his mind with clean villages and healthy people, which he desired for his own home village. At the beginning of the new century the Methodist Church of Australia was looking to expand into the Pacific Islands. It was already involved in New Guinea and had considered that the Solomon Islands were under the care of the Anglican Church. However, the Methodist Church found that the Western Solomons was as yet unevangelised, so it began to recruit volunteers for this endeavour. There were many offers from Fijians and Samoans who had already shared in taking the Gospel to their neighbours.

Sam Aqarao was one who thought he would like to join this venture. He hoped it would be to his own village. He was chosen not only because he was a Solomon Islander, but also because he was a humble, sincere man of faith. Sam boarded the ship Titus and set sail with the other missionaries on 2 May 1902. On 23 May they anchored off the little island of Nusa Zonga in Munda harbour where they held their first service of worship. The local people were singularly unimpressed by the singing and praying, but Sam realized that at last this was an opportunity to bring new understanding to his fellow Solomon Islanders even though he was many miles from his own village.

Over the next fifty years until his death in 1951 Sam played a vital role in the spread of the Gospel message. He married Rachel Tote, and together they spread the good news to many places in the Western Islands. The stone, which had been dropped in Fiji, sent its ripples in wider and wider circles.

Before the Europeans began work on Bougainville in 1922 there were already Solomon Islanders who were prepared to move from familiar surroundings to the unknown so that the good news could be shared. The first names recorded are Shadrach Peuhai and Paul Sai who went to Harinai, and Daniela Seleheti who went to Tonohu in the Siwai area in 1916. Some were already familiar with the people of south Bougainville because of trading and family ties but it was the imperative to share what they had received about Jesus Christ and God's love, which encouraged them to take whatever risks were necessary. Gradually the movement extended to Teop and Buka. The first evangelists were largely untrained with only their personal experience to share, but over the years people with specific skills such as teaching and medical knowledge were prepared to go and share what they had received.

From the south the ripples were extending also, as over the years the Methodist influence moved to Honiara and Guadalcanal through those working with government

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and further to Aola in the mountains. The ripples extended eastward to the outer islands of Sikaiana with varying degrees of acceptance. There were also cross ripples as missionaries came from New Britain to join those already serving from Samoa, Tonga and Fiji.

In 1950 the Papua New Guinea Highlands were opened to outside influences. The churches recognised the need to be present in this new field, and also realised the value of including indigenous people in the missionary endeavour. It had been proved over the years that the Gospel was more readily accepted when delivered by people of their own colour. The Solomon Islands church wanted to take part in this new venture. There were many volunteers but eventually two were chosen, John Pirah from Siwai and Alpheus Alekera from Roviana. Together with their wives Ruth Mohe and Eileen Soper and their families they set off for Tari in the Southern Highlands. They travelled by small steamer, bigger cargo ship and then by small plane. They left behind them some of their children, their land, the sea and its fish, and made their lives among a people of different cultures and in the cold climate of the mountains. Courage and faith carried them into these new surroundings.

Over the next few years many others were chosen for their variety of gifts, from teachers to medical workers, pastors and carpenters and from all areas of the Solomon Islands. It is appropriate to list these first missionaries who went to such a different culture to extend the ripples. We acknowledge that their wives and children, though not named, were equally involved in this extension work.

This list is recorded in George Carter's book, *Ti-e Varane*

Buka	Daniel Keskes Isaac Kenaji Timothy Tamasan Matthew Beaso
Teop	Eroni Sande Joel Kaetovuhu Levi Pahianavi Samuel Kiki Peter Pupuhi
Kieta	Samson Taming Daniel Kahona Amos Taorama
Buin	John Pirah John Wesley Pinoko Solomon Donguhoring Nathan Sipisong Titus Sania Stephen Taumuna
Choiseul	Scotter Bo

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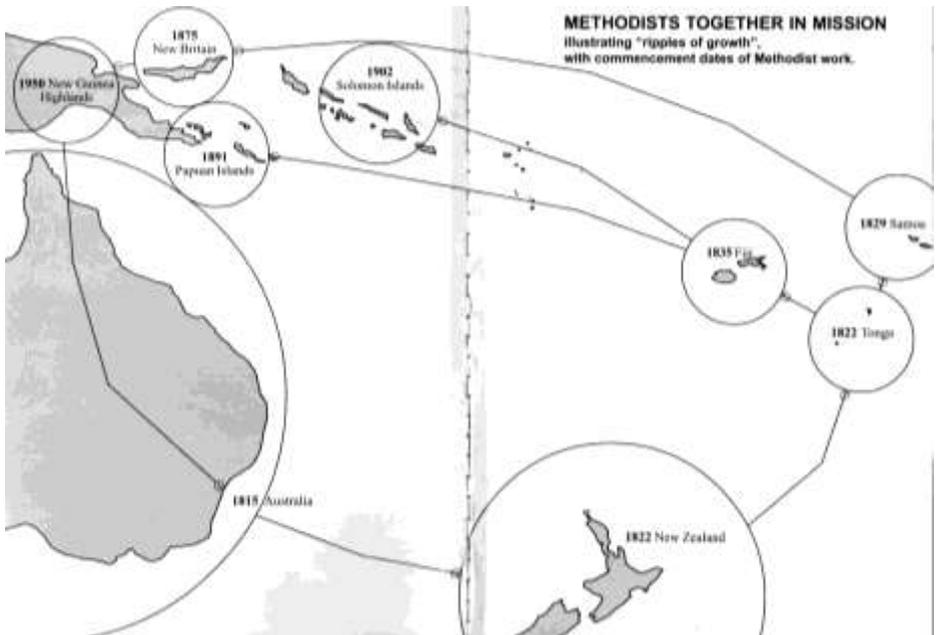
Vella Burley Mesipitu
John Aqolo Buin
Reuben Tapala
Frank Lobe

Roviana JohnTeu
Alpheus Alekera
Lester Sogabule
Simeon Tavaeke
Marovo Matthew Harper
Alex Lokopio

The story of Pacific missions is a story of Pacific peoples going to their neighbours, sometimes their traditional enemies, to islands near and far, sharing, often at great cost, what they had themselves received. In the Solomons also, the people who received the light of the Gospel were quick to share it with those who, as they expressed it, lived in darkness. From Munda to Vella and Choiseul, from the Western Solomons to Bougainville and Buka, and to the Highlands of New Guinea new Christians carried the Gospel of Jesus with enthusiasm.

And the ripples still continue to widen. With increased education and opportunities in new technology and travel, the same impetus to share the good news with others carries people into all the world.

Nancy Carter



John Veo Bitibule Wise Pastor

John Bitibule was born on the 17 May 1907 to Guipitu and Taqu. He was the last of their eight children and the only one to survive infancy. As a child he did not enjoy good health and was fortunate to survive. His parents were of chiefly Roviana stock, his father a skilled canoe sailor who had guided many headhunting expeditions to Choiseul and Ysabel. Guipitu had journeyed to Australia in his youth in the crew of a four-masted trading ship. He spent about a year at Paramatta in Sydney and visited Brisbane and other places. Although John's parents had already been influenced by the mission, his mother followed ancient custom and went into solitary exile for three weeks after each confinement.



John Bitibule

Mrs Helena Goldie visited the mother and her new baby and did what she could for them. This was one of the reasons, which in 1912 brought them, and thirty of their relatives to seek Christian baptism. The little boy was baptised John, after Mr John F Goldie.

Boaz Veo and Miriam Miri were taken as new baptismal names by John's parents. This vigorous couple showed great zeal for the Gospel. Until he died in 1943, Boaz Veo was a local preacher and a strong leader of the Lotu. Miriam, who in those early

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years often accompanied Mrs Goldie on her journeys to the villages, lived until 1957, a saintly and much loved woman.

When the Rev. W Leembruggen was appointed to assist Mr Goldie in 1914, he gathered young John into the school and tried to instil the rudiments of discipline into this high-spirited lad. In his autobiography, John records that when Miss Mabelle Davey returned to Australia, Mary Gartrell took her place in the school. He remarks how these gentle ladies seemed formidable figures to a small boy, and the hours of school were irksome. He records how grateful he was for the thorough grounding he received. By 1921 John had reached the top class and came directly under the care of the newly appointed headmaster, JHL Waterhouse.

Waterhouse was to influence a whole generation of Methodist leaders. His brass band, his fine teaching and his skilful leadership appealed to young men like John Bitibule and gave them a confidence to use their knowledge.

In June 1922 the school closed for two weeks. Mr Goldie asked three youths from the top class, John Bitibule among them, to be teachers. When school resumed, he was given charge of the lowest class at the Kokegelo School. It was an arduous life. School began at 6.00 am with morning prayers and continued to 11.15 with only one break. At 11.30 senior boys and the young teachers attended College classes till 1.30 pm. Then from 2 till 5.30 pm they worked on the station or in the gardens.

By 1925 John, an experienced teacher, was promoted to college lecturer. He held this post until 1956, under a succession of missionaries Waterhouse, Dent, Hayman, Leadley and Hall. He also put his hand to many tasks from keeping Circuit records to leading the Station choir. In 1927, at the time of the Silver Jubilee, he married Nellie, a young woman who had for some years been a mission student.

Through the years John Bitibule assisted in the training of, and gained the respect of many people from all over the District who later became leaders in the Church and the community. His great influence was most clearly seen when in 1954 he obeyed a long felt call of God and offered for the ordained ministry. This decision helped to change the attitude of people towards the idea of an indigenous ministry, and prepared the way for the church growth that took place in Solomon Islands' Methodism a few years later.

After service in Roviana, Buka and Vella Lavella Circuits as assistant minister and a long period of ill health, John was ordained on 19 January 1961 by the Rev. EC Leadley, with whom he had worked twenty years before.

He closed his ministry with a very influential two years in the town of Gizo, where he lifted the spiritual tone of the Church and the whole town. He was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours of 1964, a fitting recognition of forty-two years of outstanding service to God and the community being described at the time as, *giving a fine spiritual lead. He is a fine preacher and an understanding pastor, whose personal influence will be for the good of the Church.*

Alan Leadley



John and Nellie Bitibole with Editor Alan Leadley

Scotter and Mary Bo

First Choiseul Missionaries to New Guinea Highlands

The names of Scotter and Mary Bo are not widely known in the Solomon Islands United Church, other than on Choiseul, but their story is one which needs recording.

At the end of the Second World War, Scotter Bo was a youth in his late teens. When the Sasamuqa people came back from their enforced stay in the bush, the missionaries returned, and school was reopened. Scotter, an orphaned village boy living with relations at Sasamuqa, went back to school to finish his primary education. It was not long, however, before he decided to leave school and go to work for Mr Seton, manager of the coconut plantation at Luti, twenty-five miles south of Sasamuqa.



Scotter Bo

Mr Seton, who had been a coast watcher during the war, and knew Choiseul and its people well, saw the need for a medical clinic at Luti to cater for his labour line and the people in the nearby villages. He paid for Scotter to go to Honiara to train as a nurse - a two-year course at that time. Scotter was under bond to work for Mr Seton for seven years on completion of the course. One incident occurred in which a cousin of Scotter's was admitted for delivery of a child. Scotter refused to assist with the delivery, because it was forbidden according to custom. He was sent out to cut grass for two weeks! He completed the course successfully, and returned to Luti to take charge of the clinic Mr Seton had built, giving a much-needed service to the people.

The first Solomon Island missionaries, John Pirah and Alpheus Alekera, had gone to New Guinea Highlands in 1953. Not long after this, Scotter told the minister at

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Sasamuqa of his desire to go as a missionary to the Highlands, while realizing that he must keep faith with Mr Seton and finish his bond first. He still had two or three years to go. He continued to work for Seton, first at Luti, then as overseer and nurse at Supizae, an island in Choiseul Bay, where Seton had another plantation. At the same time, he tried to prepare himself for aspects of missionary work other than medical.

Mary Savukesa, who later married Scotter, came from Malevaqa village, about seven miles northeast of Choiseul Bay. Her family, previously Roman Catholic, joined the Methodist Lotu in about 1932, when Mary would have been an infant. Mary came to the Sisters' House, Sasamuqa, as a student in about 1949, aged seventeen years. She was a very attractive and capable girl. When her brother's wife died in childbirth, Mary returned to the Sisters' House with the baby, Peter, to care for him under the Sisters' supervision. All this time she was gaining knowledge and experience which would fit her for her future life. After one year, her family again insisted that she return home, probably because they had heard that she and Scotter were interested in each other or were corresponding. Choiseul is a patri-lineal island, but Malevaqa is one of the few villages which is strongly opposed to its girls marrying away from their own area.

Scotter, nearing the end of his contract with Mr Seton, was accepted for New Guinea Highlands, but he needed to be married before he went. His choice was obviously Mary and she reciprocated his feelings, but the way was not easy. Her family was adamant in its refusal.

At Sasamuqa, two representatives of Scotter's clan, his cousin Harold Emu and Catechist Colosse Tuzakana, were delegated to go to members of Mary's family, and officially ask for their consent to the marriage. This was customary procedure. The two men were on their way to Quarterly Meeting on the other side of Choiseul, and, stopping at Malevaqa, spent a long evening discussing the matter with Mary's family. The answer was still a strong refusal. But Mary had other ideas. She firmly believed it was God's plan for her to marry Scotter and go with him to the Highlands. Before Harold and Colosse left she asked them, in secret, to pick her up on their way home, when she would return to Sasamuqa and marry Scotter in a legal church wedding. It took great courage and strength of character for a Choiseul girl to do this against the family's wishes, but Mary knew she was right. She duly came to Sasamuqa and stayed for three weeks while the banns were called, then she and Scotter were married in a church wedding ceremony.

When her family realized that they couldn't win, they relented and changed their attitude. Her father was in poor health, but her brother came forty miles to the wedding, gave her the family's blessing, and said that they should be proud that a member of their family was one of the first Choiseul people to take the Gospel to the Highlands.

Scotter and Mary left for the Highlands in April 1957, flying to Lae then to the Highlands on a tiny Aviation Fellowship plane, landing at Mendi. Mary had not been away from Choiseul or on a plane before. She was seven months pregnant. They were first stationed at Mendi, Scotter working in the Hospital and in the surrounding area.

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Their first child, Andrew, was born in July 1957. Mary, never very robust, had a long and difficult labour, so much so that the MAF plane was sent for to take her to Mt Hagen Hospital. But progress of the labour improved, and the baby was born on the plane before arriving at Mt Hagen.

Scotter and Mary were much loved by the Highlands people. Mary's house was the only one to which Mendi people came and left bundles of firewood without expecting any reward.

Scotter pioneered a new area across the mountains. There was no road. And his primary task was to persuade and help the people to make an airstrip so that MAF planes could land there. At the same time, he carried on with his medical work and pastoral and evangelical activities. Before the airstrip was completed, a very severe influenza epidemic hit the area. Practically all the village people were affected, and it was not long before Scotter ran out of medicines. He had some very serious cases; likely to be fatal if not given treatment. There was no one to send. Scotter walked for twenty-four hours over the mountains, obtained supplies from Mendi, and walked back. Many lives were saved by his action, and he earned the love and gratitude of the people in this pioneer area.

Later, Scotter and his family moved to Tari, where leprosy work was a major part of the Mission health services. Scotter's ability and dedication were clearly recognized. During his time there, he took full charge of the leprosy hospital while Sister Edith James went on furlough for six months. Scotter and Mary stayed two terms — a total of eight years — in the Highlands. Four children were born to them there — four difficult labours for Mary. Her health had never been good, and Scotter also was feeling the strain health wise. In 1966 the family returned permanently to the Solomons and to Sasamuqa.

After a brief furlough, Scotter became a registered nurse supervisor of the Sasamuqa Hospital, graded as a clinic by the Government Medical Department. Ben Pitatamae, the previous supervisor for many years, had recently died. Scotter was responsible for the clinic and general medical work. Later he took over supervision of the maternity work as well, but always, following Choiseul custom, called me to replace him if the woman in labour was in a 'tabu' relationship to him.

Sometimes we worked together, and I vividly remember one such occasion. Scotter and his family were sitting down to their evening meal when a canoe landed in front of their house. A patient was brought into the maternity ward. The baby had been born before arrival, but the mother had an adherent placenta and a severe haemorrhage. Scotter came to alert me, and then returned briefly to his house. "This is a very difficult one," he said. "Sister and I will do the work, you all stay here around the table and pray!" Scotter and I went to work; I was, fortunately, experienced in removing reluctant placentas, and between us, with God's help, we soon had the situation under control - placenta removed, haemorrhage stopped and a live mother and baby.

There was no doctor on Choiseul. The doctors from Gizo (Government Provincial Hospital), seventy-five miles away, paid only occasional visits. Scotter was a very

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capable nurse, with a gift for diagnosing serious illness even when the symptoms were not clear. He was completely dedicated to his work, and to serving the Church and community. He seldom took a holiday, and never refused a call, day or night. For years he was the church choirmaster and also a lay preacher. He was loved and trusted by the community and the people of the surrounding villages. Mary continued to support him wholeheartedly, and to take an active part in the work of the church.

Mary and Scotter had three more children after their return from Papua New Guinea. The youngest was John Wesley, born on 1 June 1975. They also adopted Carter, one of the twins brought up in the Sisters' nursery. Scotter's cousin, Harold, had adopted the other twin. Scotter and Mary took Carter "so that the twins will always belong to the same family."

Saturday 1 June 1985 was John Wesley's tenth birthday. Scotter and his daughter, Joyce, aged twenty years, left Sasamuqa at 9 am by canoe and outboard motor, to go to their garden up the Kolobangara River (six miles up the coast) to get extra food for Johnnies birthday party. Going up the river, Scotter suddenly collapsed and died instantly of a heart attack. Realizing that her father was dead, Joyce could only continue to steer the canoe up the river until she came to a small settlement and called for help. The people came running to the landing, but all they could do was to provide a driver to take the canoe back to Sasamuqa. I can still see that canoe coming back over the now shallow reef much earlier than expected, with a different driver, and Joyce standing up weeping and wailing. Something had happened to Scotter! My thoughts flew to Mary. How would she cope with this shock and loss?

Scotter was buried the next afternoon in the hospital area, near the house in which he had lived. He was about fifty-eight years old. The night before his death the choir had practised the song, *I come to the Garden alone*, to sing on Sunday. They sang it at the funeral. I listened to the chorus,

*And He walks with me, and
He talks with me,
and He tells me I am His own,
and the joy we share as we tarry there
none other has ever known.*

Scotter and Mary walked closely with their Lord. They were strong in faith, and constant in prayer.

Mary is now about seventy years old. She lives in Andrew's house, just behind the medical area. Andrew is a Senior Nursing Officer for the Choiseul Province, with headquarters at Sasamuqa Hospital. Mary's health has improved and she is still active in the church. Among the other children, now grown up, are another nurse, a theological student, a schoolteacher and the treasurer of the Medical Committee. There is always some of the family teaching Sunday school, singing in the choirs, taking services. There are a number of grandchildren growing up, whom we hope will follow on, serve the church and community, and bring honour to their grandparents' names.

Lucy H Money



Mary and Scotter Bo leaving Choiseul
to be pastor/teacher in New Guinea highlands about 1959.

Francis Bongbong First Ordained Buka Minister

The Methodist Conference of 1948 appointed newly ordained Gordon A R Cornwell to the Solomon Islands District, originally to serve in the Bilua Circuit on Vella Lavella. However, an appointment to Buka meant that Gordon and Irene Cornwell made their lives there for fifteen years. Their arrival by local trading ship introduced them to a young student, Francis Bongbong. Francis Bongbong had come to the Mission school following the Second World War and the Japanese occupation of the Buka area. He was one of a group who had been admitted to Mission schooling under the Commonwealth Restructuring Training Scheme (CRTS). He never asked for leadership or authority, but never shirked it when the need was presented, and accepted leadership with efficiency, skill, sympathy and humility.



Newly ordained Francis Bongbong at Bilua Synod 1963.

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The young scholar had been under the influence of the Rev. CTJ Luxton and Usaia Sotutu and his wife Margaret Sotutu (who was a teacher.) Each of these earlier tutors drew out of the young Bongbong his natural talents and gave him an early foundation upon which the remainder of his schooling took place under teaching Sisters Helen Whitlow, Patricia Hulks and Norma Graves at Skotolan, and Thelma Duthie at Keesu.

About 1950 the Buka Circuit had a number of talented students at the District Training School, Goldie College, in the Solomon Islands. Among them were Matthew Beaso, Jekonaiah Kaskas, Agrippa Tukau, John Reid Salagil Zaie, Thomas Tis and Francis Bongbong.

Francis returned from the Solomons to become a teacher at Petaj Village School, but his calling was always to the ministry.

So that he could do more study he was brought onto the Skotolan station where he was given extra tuition. Francis was first of a line of the early Lay Preachers. He passed his skills on to others faithfully until the day came when Synod decided in favour of his entry into the ordained ministry.

At his ordination, Gordon Cornwell gave Francis his ordination Bible, a tray with communion glasses and paten and recently translated orders of service for Baptism and Holy Communion in Petaj. He became the first Buka man to be ordained.

Francis Bongbong was appointed to Teataka in the Teop circuit and later under the Rev. Brian Sides in the Buka area where he concentrated his preaching and teaching on the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus as Lord.

He was a forerunner in the early moves towards the Union of the Methodist Districts and the formation of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. He experienced first hand the changes in church strategy, political problems of racial groups within the Bougainville society, and pressure for self-government.

In 1986 and 1987 the Bougainville 'Troubles' erupted. The church was in between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the New Guinea Police and Army. Francis Bongbong stood resolute as pastor to the people. The mission station at Skotolan was sacked; the medical assistant killed and schoolhouses were burned.

Francis was a faithful minister of the Gospel to the end. He encouraged the formation of group ministries, which went out to the villages of the West Buka Circuit to worship and live their Christianity. He retired from ministry because of illness. He is remembered as a highly regarded minister, a leader among the leaders of his people.

"I chose you and sent you out to produce fruit, the kind of fruit that will last" John 15: 15

Gordon AR Cornwell

Hazel Boseto

First Marama Bishop

One evening in 1958, Sister Jessie Grant and I were going for a walk on the Sasamuqa station when we met Leslie Boseto, who at that time was preparing for a two-year term in New Zealand to attend the Bible Training Institute. Jessie, in a teasing manner, began telling Leslie that, before he went, he should find a girl who would be his fiancée, and marry him on his return. Leslie did not appear to take the matter very seriously, but obviously he had been doing more thinking than we realised. To Jessie's surprise, next morning he handed her a letter addressed to Hazel Pitavavini, daughter of Cecil Pitakomoki and Nellie Nanamana, at Tabusaru, the far end of the village, and asked her to deliver it. The answer from both Hazel and her parents was positive. Before Leslie left for New Zealand, he and Hazel were engaged. Hazel was a village girl, with a good Christian family background. She had her primary education at Sasamuqa School, but there was no secondary education for girls at that time. Yet she stood out among the girls in the area, and we all felt that Leslie had chosen the right helpmate.

It was agreed that while Leslie was in New Zealand, Hazel should spend two years in the Sisters' House at Sasamuqa, learning as much as possible about house-keeping, cooking, child care, and leadership among the girls there. At the end of the two years, Leslie returned to Choiseul, and was appointed as Catechist to Senga section. On the occasion of the opening of the new church at Sasamuqa, in October 1961, Leslie and Hazel were married. The next year, they proceeded to Rarongo Theological College for Leslie to do his ministerial training, and Hazel also to receive further training as a minister's wife. On their return to the Solomons, in 1964, Leslie became Superintendent minister in Gizo. Hazel as Marama or minister's wife, was a leader of the women in the Circuit. In 1968 the United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands was formed, and Leslie became the first Bishop of the Solomon Islands Region, with Hazel as Marama Bishop. They moved from Gizo to the United Church Headquarters at Munda.

It was about this time that a Regional United Church Women's Conference was held at Sasamuqa, which women from all the Circuits attended. This meant that several languages would be used. Hazel, as Regional President of the United Church Women's Fellowship, chaired the meetings, and we marvelled at her ability to lead such a gathering in Roviana, Babatana, English, and some Pidgin English. Her wisdom and leadership ability were clearly demonstrated in what was a difficult task.

In 1972 Leslie was appointed the first Melanesian Moderator of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and the family moved to Port Moresby. By this time, they had three children, Frederick, Jennifer and Pauline, and later a fourth, Wilma, was added to the family. Leslie was Moderator for eight years, and Hazel, as well as caring for house and family, visiting villages, taking an active part in developing women's activities, was with Leslie, always supporting him.

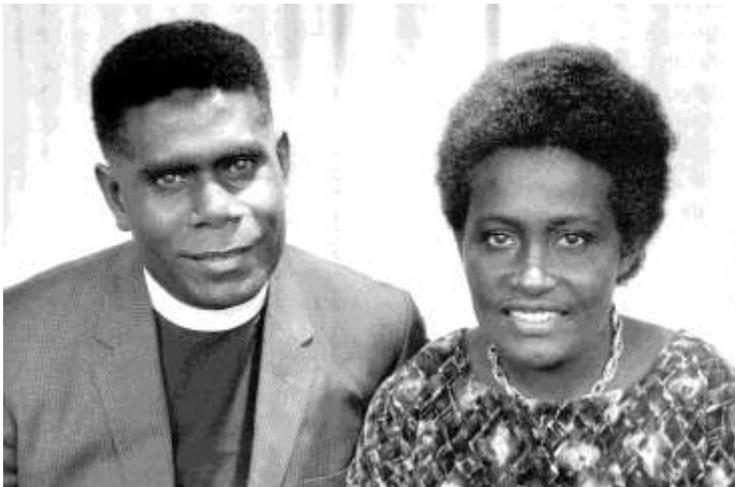
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After two terms (eight years) as Moderator, the family returned to the Solomons in 1980, where Leslie again took up the position of Bishop of the Solomon Islands Region. This he held for about ten years. During this time, Hazel was always there to support him and to give help and advice wherever it was needed in the women's activities.

It is not so much what Hazel has done that is important, but what she is. A loyal helpmate to Leslie at all times, a wise mother, a gracious hostess, a loving and caring friend to those who needed help and advice. Her faith, her spiritual power and her dependence on prayer are evident in her life. She gives herself willingly to help both young and old. The positions that Leslie has held have meant that Hazel must attend many official functions and mix with those in high positions, which she does with grace and confidence, but she is equally at home in the village, with people of all ages and social standing.

During the recent fighting and troubles in Honiara, when Leslie was Minister of Home Affairs, Hazel did not return to their village of Boeboe, but stayed in Honiara with Leslie, to give him care and support in that very difficult and dangerous time. Their children are scattered around: Frederick a surgeon in Honiara, Jennifer also a doctor taking further studies in Australia, Pauline with University qualification in education working with the Education Department in Honiara, and Wilma, now married, a Secondary School teacher at Goldie College. They are all serving the community and all acknowledge their mother's loving contribution to their family life. Hazel Boseto is one of whom it could truly be said, *Her children rise up and call her blessed and so does her husband* (Proverbs 31:25). So indeed do the many people, young and old, whom she has helped and influenced and whose lives have been enriched by her friendship.

Lucy H Money



Leslie and Hazel Boseto

Leslie Boseto First Solomon Islands Bishop

One of the foremost theological thinkers of the Pacific and specifically Melanesia, Leslie Boseto is a Solomon Islander from the village of Boe Boe on Choiseul Island. Leslie was educated in the mission school at Sasamuqa. His leadership potential and natural intelligence was recognized early and Leslie was sent to New Zealand to attend Wesley College and later the Bible Training Institute. He candidated for the Methodist ministry and completed his training at Rarongo Theological College. He was ordained in 1964. The Methodist Church in the Solomons became a partner in the formation of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Having served the Church in various congregations, Leslie was appointed Chairman-elect of the Solomon Islands Synod in 1966.

When the United Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands came into being in 1968 Leslie Boseto became the first Bishop of the Solomon Islands Region. He gave dynamic and stimulating leadership to the Church in this new era of history. His election as Bishop was a sign of the rapid indigenisation of the ministry that had taken place since the War years. Leslie was installed in 1972 as the first indigenous Moderator of the United Church, giving leadership for two terms. This gave him many opportunities to travel and to represent the United Church of PNG and Solomon Is in other countries and other churches. His visits to the Overseas Mission Board meetings in Sydney and New Zealand were memorable, as he would listen and then summarise the discussion in a few sentences bringing the focus of the meeting immediately to the point of decision.

Leslie brought to all his roles within the life of the Church a pastoral heart. His concern for the churches and the people in troubled Bougainville was shown in the attempts he and Patelisio Finau, the Roman Catholic Bishop in Tonga, made to mediate with the Catholic and United Churches when fighting had broken out and the Panguna mine closed.

Leslie never stopped reading and learning. Every overseas visit brought new experiences and conversations. He became an advocate of Melanesian theology. He never drifted away from his roots and measured all he learnt and heard against the relevance of such knowledge to his own people. As a member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee he contributed a sound knowledge and understanding of the Pacific, keeping the Pacific churches in touch with what was happening on the world scale, and the World Council of Churches in touch with the Pacific churches. As a member of the WCC Central Committee, he was well known for his insights and contribution to theological discussions. In 1991, he became the first Pacific Islander elected as one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches.

Author John Garrett described Leslie Boseto as *the most prominent leader in Western Solomons in the post-war period* who brought the organising ability and strong beliefs

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of the Methodists to his task as the first Bishop. His vision was widened by his travels as Moderator of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, but he never became alienated from his Choiseul roots. He knew firsthand the Christian Fellowship Church, which had broken away from Methodism under the prophet Silas Eto.

Leslie Boseto is recognised as one of the foremost Melanesian, indeed Pacific, theologians of the present age. Declining the invitation to be the first Governor General of the newly independent Solomon Islands, Leslie nevertheless accepted that his own people saw him in a role of national leadership for the infant nation. Thus, after serving another term as Bishop of the Solomon Islands Region of the United Church, and taking well-earned retirement, Leslie accepted nomination to stand as a Member of Parliament. He became a member of the then Government, holding ministerial positions. As a Government minister, Leslie applied his Christian theology to his work, consistently reflecting on how God is involved with the ordinary people of Solomon Islands.

Leslie has always been supported by special people, the most important of whom is his wife, Hazel, also from Choiseul. This couple together have ministered and served Christ all their lives. Together they have four children who have each done well in his or her chosen career, always keeping their parents' rejoinders in mind - that their calling is to serve their own Solomon Islander people.

Ann Hogan (nee Carter)



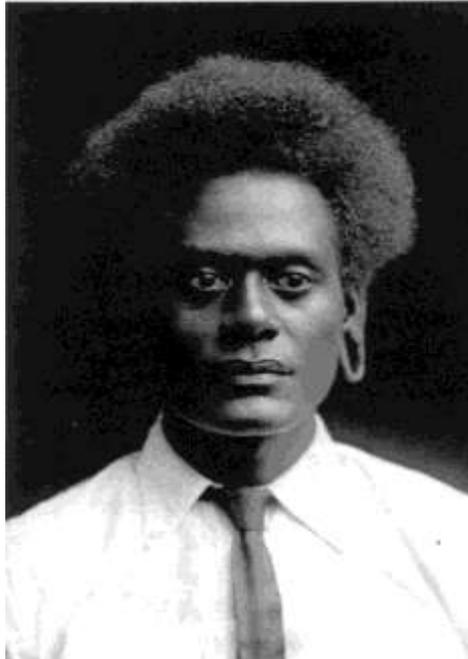
**Ordinands and Bishop Boseto at Synod at Kekesu 1970-
J Redi, E Itoro, Aaron Lipa, and Dan Bula Jr.**

Daniel Bula

First Convert on Vella Lavella

At the age of ten Bula was being taught to kill. There was danger 100 yards beyond the perimeter of his family's home. He was with his father when they came across a lone boy of his own age from a neighbouring village. They were in conflict with these people. Bula's father showed him how to murder by smothering the lad. One day a white man came ashore and showed intentions of staying, by building himself a hut.

Bula was sheltering from the midday sun curled up in the darkest corner of his hut. His raw eyelids were badly infected. He heard before he saw the Rev. Reg C Nicholson come inside the shelter. Slowly he relented and took his cupped hands away from his eyes allowing this stranger to bathe them. This care continued for a fortnight; the beginnings of a bond of trust and friend-ship that was to last Daniel Bula's all too short life. He moved into Nicholson's house as his cook boy, though the support he gave this stranger made Bula the butt of ridicule, opposition and reproach.



Daniel Bula

Over those early years, from 1907 when he was twelve years old, Bula grew in grace with a *beautiful trust in Jesus as his Saviour*.

In choosing his baptismal name he said, "When my people were all against me I felt lonely and afraid but I always remembered the story of Daniel".

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Because Bula came as a boy to the Mission he had not had time to be aligned with any one group of Vella Lavella people. He was not a chief. He had no enemies. He was a free spirit. By canoe he and 'Nicolo' travelled from one village to the next around the island on a regular plan. Going ashore Daniel could sense whether it was wise to stay or to move on quickly. To him must go the credit that the vast majority of the villagers on Vella Lavella and Ranonga islands became unified in their acceptance of the ministry of the Methodist Church.

By the age of sixteen, Bula *knew that Christ had taken possession of his heart and that he was indeed a child of God*. Great was his influence on new converts through his life of prayer and his testimony at the Thursday afternoon class-meetings. He was proof of Nicholson's belief that people are influenced most by preaching that comes from one of their own.

He was an apt pupil of the missionary in learning to stitch up cuts to arms and legs and to dress sores, and even to fix fractures. Perhaps Daniels finest work was seen in his orphanage. Into this house he collected waifs and strays from all around Vella Lavella and Ranonga. The place came to be known as *Daniel's Den of Lions*. Up to sixteen boys at a time lived with him.

In 1916 he spent a year in Australia and New Zealand speaking in churches and at Methodist Conference. He climbed Mt Taranaki bare footed in winter, and visited the hot springs at Rotorua. His dream of being a surgeon was heightened by the day he spent in the Melbourne Hospital viewing operations and talking with students. His presence in New Zealand encouraged the church to double its giving to Missions to £10,000.

Daniel and Rini Vailoduri were married in December 1921. Whereas Daniel had found singing before the crowds difficult, Rini with her grace and charm had a gift for song that matched her warm disposition. Daniel as a young man was appointed catechist for the head station. Nicholson says that *his tasks were first aid specialist, drill master, school teacher, preacher and general overseer*. But whatever day-to-day tasks Bula did, it was as a follower of Christ that he was most influential. Of his own spirituality he said, *what a tree is to the leaf, the great Father is to me*.

Daniel Bulas prayer life was certainly the secret of his spiritual power. He has been described as the best loved man of Vella. From the age of twelve till he died fifteen years later he saw the end of headhunting, wife strangling and child murder. Following a short illness Daniel died on 30 September 1922. Rini was to write. *My Dani was ill for two days only, and then God took him from me. I cannot understand why. But I know he has gone to be with God*. Their baby son was to carry on his name. Granddaughter Dorcas continued her grandfather's interest in all things medical by training as a nurse and is now married to the Rev. Martin Seru, from Duisei, South Bougainville.

Phil Taylor

Edwin Daga

A Missionary In His Own Land

Several small waves of migrants from the Gilbert Islands swept into the Solomons around the year 1963. The isolated Phoenix Group and Line Island atolls had become uninhabitable, largely through lack of water. The British Government therefore arranged to move the population. The people were Micronesians and large numbers belonged to the Church founded by the London Missionary Society. These folk were told that they were to become part of the Methodist Church as it was then called.

We knew that integration would not be easy. These light-brown, straight-haired folk spoke a single but entirely different language and were culturally different in many ways from the Melanesians of the Solomons. They had never seen a hill, a forest or a cow. It was a strange, bewildering and somewhat frightening land to which they were being transported.

I was asked to represent the Church and welcome the first group as they disembarked from a steamer in Gizo harbour. The task of greeting them would not be easy, but an 'angel' appeared on the scene. Edwin Daga was a Roviana teacher and pastor. While in Honiara, the capital, he had become familiar with the Gilbertese language. Together, Edwin and I waited on the wharf as the people and their belongings came ashore on the ship's lighters.

The scene was chaotic — people everywhere, boxes, chests, crying children, all no doubt apprehensive and somewhat fearful. We managed to gather a few people aside and ask for the Deacons. Eventually about a dozen gathered with us on the wharf in a tight circle. I greeted them in the name of the Church and to their amazement and no doubt relief, Edwin repeated my words in Gilbertese. We spent a few moments in prayer, led by Edwin, as we sought God's blessing and protection on the newcomers. Many years later, many of those Deacons remembered that special welcome.

Most of these folk settled at Titiana on Gizo Island. Their first pastor in a new land was Edwin Daga who settled there with his family. Although Edwin could almost see his home village of Rarumana (across Fergusson Passage, made famous in the Second World War as the place where John F Kennedy's small boat was rammed by a Japanese warship) he was indeed a missionary as he worked with the Gilbertese newcomers. It is thanks to him that the integration of the Gilbertese people into Solomon Islands society and into the United Church made such a successful commencement.

A later wave of migrants settled on Wagina Island (South Choiseul) and among them were two brothers. Takarebu was an ordained minister and Tim was soon to be ordained. After spending time in orientation at Goldie College, they took up ministerial duties at the two main settlements.

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These former immigrants have integrated well. No longer are they referred to as Gilbertese (or people from Kiribati), they are Solomon Islanders!

It is to folk like the kindly Edwin Daga, a missionary in his own country, that much of this success story can be attributed. A number of Kiribati ministers now serve in Solomon Island Circuits. A former student from Goldie College (Tupera) served among Australian Aborigines for many years. The Rev. Burabeti Tabe was recently appointed lecturer at the Anglican Patteson Theological College, the first United Church person to hold such a position. Mareta Tahu (nee Tabe) Burabeti's sister is the first, and only, woman ordained in the United Church of the Solomon Islands.

Jim Cropp

Stephen & Mulu Gadepeta

Stephen: the first Catechist on Choiseul

Any record of the growth of the Church in the Western Solomon Islands from Methodist Mission to Methodist Church, and later United Church of the Solomon Islands, needs to include the story of Stephen Gadepeta. From the beginning in 1905 to his death in 1961, he was a true leader of the church on Choiseul. Ministers and other overseas workers came and went, but Stephen remained. He was friend, guide, advisor and helper to the missionaries and chief, leader, confidante and mediator to the people, showing Christ's love in his own life. He brought missionaries and people together, helping them to understand each other.

When the Rev. S R Rooney landed at Sasamuqa on 5 May 1905, Gadepeta was a young boy of about seventeen years. The son of a chief, he followed the customs, traditions and way of life of his people. He was already initiated into warfare and fighting, which kept the people in a state of division and fear. But he was dissatisfied, wanting a better way of life. So, when others tolerated, ignored or were actively antagonistic to the white missionary, Stephen stayed close to Rooney. He served Mr Rooney, and learnt from him, ignoring the taunts and anger of his own people and the chiefs. A pioneer missionary's work is slow to bring results, especially when the language must be learnt and put into writing for the first time. After the Easter services in April 1910, Gadepeta and a number of other youths whom he had influenced to listen to Mr Rooney, went to the minister and said they wanted to give their lives to Christ. After several months of intensive teaching, on Sunday 8 August 1910, Stephen Gadepeta and nine other young men were baptised. Stephen's name has always been first in the Baptismal Register of the Choiseul Circuit.

Stephen was sent to the Head Station at Roviana in 1911 - 1912 for further schooling. Coming back, he married Mulu Luduvavini, a young widow who had lost her infant child. With Stephen and Mulu it was a love match, and the bond between them always remained. Mulu, though she never pushed herself forward, was a strong and courageous woman, who stood firmly beside Stephen in any dangerous situation. Before long they were appointed to Lologae, only about four miles from Sasamuqa, but still isolated and dangerous. The chief had agreed to put up a building and provide accommodation for a teacher, but the people were still taking part in raids, in fighting and in heathen practices. Stephen and Mulu were often in difficult situations but stood firm, and with his wisdom and faith, Stephen was able to settle arguments which otherwise would have led to conflict.

Sometime after Mr Rooney's departure, his successor, the Rev. HR Roycroft, recalled Stephen and Mulu to Sasamuqa, needing Stephen's help and guidance. When the Rev. Vincent Binet succeeded Mr Roycroft, Stephen's help was even more necessary as Mr Binet had had no previous missionary experience. In 1920, the Rev. JR Metcalfe arrived at Sasamuqa, and Mr Binet took up residence at Paqoe, on the other side of Choiseul. Between John Metcalfe and Stephen, there seemed to be a special

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relationship. Completely opposite in many ways, they complemented each other. Mr Metcalfe spent forty years in the Solomons, most of the time on Choiseul. He and Stephen worked together harmoniously, especially in the training of local leaders and delegation of authority to the local people.



Stephen Gadapeta

During the Second World War, Stephen was in sole charge of the church on Choiseul. Mr Metcalfe, who had not left the Solomons with the other missionaries, moved to Munda, then to Marovo. In December 1942, all the people in the coastal villages round Choiseul, were ordered to move inland to avoid the Japanese. They lived in family groups or small hamlets on their clan land. It was owing to Stephen that the church remained strong and the people were totally loyal to the Allies. Stephen organised a preaching plan for Sunday services, the preachers tramping along the bush-clad ridges to their appointments. The children, when possible, had Sunday School. He organised a Christmas gathering and celebration so that the children would not be disappointed. He was given authority to conduct marriages, and records were faithfully kept. Both the church and government realized the value of Stephen's work and influence during the War, but he wanted no honours or praise for himself. He

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could later have been ordained, but he refused. All that he did was to the glory of God and in service to Christ and the people.

I arrived on Choiseul in 1947. I learnt much from Mr and Mrs Metcalfe, but Stephen was also my guide and advisor and taught me much. He accompanied me on my first solo trip to the other side of Choiseul, making all the travel arrangements, visiting all the villages, coastal or inland, with me. He was also my first translation assistant, and was meticulous in getting the correct Babatana meaning. Together, we completed the first translation of the Babatana New Testament.

In November 1948 Stephen, as usual, attended Synod, held this time at Keesu, on Bougainville. While there, he contracted chickenpox. As the Solomon Islands and Bougainville were under two separate administrations, for quarantine reasons, he was not allowed to return on the Synod boat. Great was the consternation of the Sasamuqa and the Babatana people.

Where was their beloved Stephen? They would willingly have taken a large war canoe (it was before the days of outboard motors) and paddled to the top end of Bougainville to bring him home. But this was not allowed, and it was six months (May 1949) before Stephen was brought home by ship.

Stephen and Mulu had no children of their own. Quite early on, they adopted a little girl who had been captured in a raid, and was living as a slave at Boe. Following custom, Stephen bought the child, Nalakoe, from her owner, paying a price which clearly indicated that she was to be his and Mulu's daughter, not a slave. She was baptised Susanna, and when she grew up she married a pastor-teacher, Solomon Damusoe. When she died, and later Solomon died also, her four children were brought up by Stephen and Mulu as their own family. Many others, mainly relatives, were loved and cared for by Stephen and Mulu in their home. In addition, they lived close to the boys' dormitories on the Mission station, and generations of boys from other villages, boarders attending senior school at Sasamuqa, were mothered by Mulu and influenced for good by Stephens life and Christian witness.

Stephen died on 21 April 1961. He had been unwell for two or three weeks, caught a chill by going down to the beach, and in a couple of days was dead.

There was a pall over the whole area. Stephen had gone. To the local people, as to us all, he was irreplaceable. For fifty-six years, Stephen had been the leader of the Choiseul Methodist people, loved and honoured by black and white alike, showing forth the spirit of Christ to all who knew him. There is much more that could be written, but the following tribute by another Choiseul catechist, Job Rotoava (later an ordained minister) speaks volumes. It was written in Babatana, just after Stephen died, and translated into English.

Stephen Gadepeta was the son of Polosovai, who was one of the Babatana chiefs. Stephen was born in the darkness of heathenism, and grew up in heathen times until he was a youth of sixteen or seventeen years. As his father had been, he was a person

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of great insight and discernment. The elders of his tribe had already chosen him to be their chief, because they could see by his life that he was worthy to be their leader.

He gave his wholehearted support to the Lotu and school, when everyone else was slow to respond, and he drew many other boys to school and Lotu. The older people were very angry with him. They told him that they would cast him off and disinherit him; he would have no wealth, no authority, no power; he would not be their chief. But he replied, 'Very well. I cannot change my mind. You may have the wealth, the chief's authority, and the power. I do not want it.'

... He was the first Catechist, and has done the work of a Catechist ever since, helping and guiding the teachers, the leaders and the people of the Lotu. He travelled on foot and by canoe, sometimes going round Choiseul by canoe (approximately 200 miles) three or four times a year to help the work of the church and the lives of the people.

Stephen always stood between the white missionaries and the native people, helping each to understand the other, guiding those who needed help, ... bearing the brunt of any misunderstanding or disagreement. He was the intermediary who drew missionaries and people together, and because of him, the work on Choiseul has gone ahead in harmony and unity.

Stephen Gadepeta was a man of peace. Always he sought peace and worked to make peace between others. He was a man of sound judgement and discernment, always quick to see the truth and to bring forward the right solutions in meetings and discussions. He was a man of love, and gave his whole life, time and strength to the work of the Christian Church. He was a man of deep humility, he always honoured others and preferred them before himself. Stephen loved righteousness, and always followed steadfastly what was right and true. In all things his preaching and teaching was born out of his own work and actions.

He was greatly loved and honoured by all the people of Choiseul. From 1905 to 1961 Stephen Gadepeta was a true servant of God, who faithfully served and led his people.

Mulu lived for several years after Stephen's death; cared for by one of Susanna's sons and his wife, as well as others who had grown up in her house. She was getting old and did not go out much. She was usually to be found in her big cookhouse, in her own special chair. Her faith was still strong. She welcomed all who came to see her, hospitable and caring as always. She had no fear of death. For her, these years were a time of waiting — waiting for God's call to join her beloved Stephen again, and to be with him in the presence of their Lord.

Lucy H Money

Belshazzar Gina

An Outstanding Pioneer in the Solomons' Church, Government and Community

Belshazzar Gina, a committed Christian, dedicated family man, orator, multi-talented Solomon Island visionary, has been described by some as a genius, but an unfulfilled one. The life and achievements of Bill Gina, an exuberant extrovert and a gifted musician and linguist, need to be considered against the conservative social and economic conditions of his time, and the major upheavals brought about by the Second World War in the Solomons. Gina died with some of his dreams unfulfilled, but his achievements were many and he is remembered with respect and affection throughout the Solomons, New Zealand and Australia by the many people he had contact with over his lifespan.

Gina was born in late 1908 or early 1909. His birth was a traumatic one and if it had not been for the intervention of Mrs Helena Goldie, he could have died at birth or shortly after. Gina spent as much time in his toddler years in the Goldie household as he did in his own home. This contact helped foster his innate linguistic and musical talent.

When the Rev. John F Goldie took a long leave in 1924, Gina accompanied him, visiting Australia and New Zealand where he formed a number of friendships which survived throughout his life. On returning to the Solomons, he found life rather difficult as he was expected to return to the life of a normal Solomon Island teenager at the Kokeqolo Mission.

In 1926 he was sent to New Zealand to attend school at Wesley College, where he formed more enduring friendships, the two most important being with Harold Demon and John Holden. His success at Wesley included achievements in cricket, swimming and music.

In 1929, Goldie, as president of the New Zealand Methodist Church, spent most of the year travelling through New Zealand and Gina was a part of this deputation. He returned to the Solomons in mid 1930 as a candidate for the Native Ministry. Initially, Gina was sent to Choiseul to receive some basic medical experience. He returned to Roviana in early 1931 and spent the next year working around the Munda area, preaching, organising events and undertaking studies in preparation for his ordination.

In February 1932 Gina married Mary, the sole surviving daughter of a Chief from Sasavele called Roni. This marriage was very successful and she was a strong and faithful partner until her death in 1977. They spent two years in Sasamuqa. Their first child died at birth. Their second, a son, called John Holden Lianga was born in November at Bilua. In early 1934, Gina and Mary and baby John were sent to Simbo where they were to live intermittantly for the next eight years. There was no established church heirarchy, so Gina could develop his church, ministry and school in

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the way he saw best. It was close enough to Bilua and Kokeqolo to allow involvement with other church activities, and family visits to Sasavele and Qurasae were also possible. As a result of the 1930s Depression, major cuts in missionary services were made and a decision was made for Gina to spend a year in New Zealand on deputation work.



Belshazzer Gina

1937 was the second of Gina's travels in New Zealand. He met all his old friends and made many new ones, and by his presence and personality, raised the awareness and need for assistance to the missionary effort in the Solomons. Given his extrovert personality, Gina was in his element doing work for which he was well suited. The only real problem was the absence from his wife and young family. Many gifts were received, some personal and others for the mission in general.

Gina returned home to his young family in January 1938, and after a period of local travel to tell of his New Zealand experiences, returned to Simbo in March. In November 1938, he was finally ordained as a minister in the Methodist Church. While still based at Simbo and in charge of all the church activities there, he was in demand by Goldie and others to organise events, including concert parties in which he was a major contributor.

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With the advent of War, most of the European missionaries, traders and Government officials left the Solomons. Almost inevitably, there were conflicts between Gina as a respected local leader and those in colonial authority. He was jailed at least twice by The District Officer, D G Kennedy, on matters that would not have stood up in a normal court of law, and was suspended from the Methodist ministry. ¹

Many are the stories of Gina and the exploits of other scouts during this period and it is widely recognised that the Solomon Island Scouts made a major contribution in the War, and rescued many Allied airmen who were shot down.

When the Colonial Administration was being re-established, Gina, along with all other Solomon Islanders of education, was recruited for the many administrative tasks.

This began what was probably the most influential phase of his career. Bill Gina became a Senior Administrative Clerk, part-time policeman (training the Police Band) and eventually a Senior Teacher at the newly established King George VI Secondary School. Subsequently he was appointed the Headmaster of a newly created native primary school at the new national capital, Honiara. He was also active in a number of community activities such as Red Cross, Scouting and radio broadcasting.

Although the rift with the Methodist Church administration was never formally resolved, Gina and Mary and their children were active within the Methodist Church community in Honiara. ² Gina was the leader of the church choir and was always in demand for an occasion needing massed singing and music. His ability to play almost any musical instrument was often put to the test.

The breakaway movement of Silas Eto and his followers to form the Christian Fellowship Church in 1960 was Gina's next crisis. This was a problem that had been looming for years and involved members of the Gina extended family. Gina tried to keep open communication with both groups and was misunderstood by both parties on different occasions. Through all this, the family continued to support the church and the needy members of the wider community. As a result of the years in Honiara, people remember Gina and his family with respect and affection throughout the Solomons.

Gina retired from Government Service at the end of 1965. He and Mary returned to the Western Solomons and went to live at Qurasae, Munda. By this time, the conflict between the Christian Fellowship Church and Methodism had subsided and there was greater co-operation between individuals and within families. Gina was reinstated as a minister in 1969. He was appointed minister at Mono Circuit in the Shortland Islands and then Munda as the Superintendent minister for the Roviana Circuit. In 1975 he was requested to work on the translation of the Bible into Roviana. While many parts including the New Testament had been translated, a complete version did not exist. He could work at his own pace and was uniquely suited to the task. His wife of forty-five years, Mary, died on 2 January 1977 and, in many respects, Gina never recovered from this loss.

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Their family was scattered throughout the Solomons and of the ten children, including three who were adopted, a few have gone on to hold Government positions, while others have prospered in various ways. The children of the next generation are also scattered, with members now living in both Australia and New Zealand. Gina's musical talent keeps reappearing in most of his children and grandchildren.

In 1979, Gina was honoured with the MBE in recognition (if somewhat belatedly) of his long service to his country. It was sad that recognition did not come while Mary was alive, as she was a major contributor to his success. His two older sons were also honoured in recognition of service to the country. John Holden Lianga was awarded the MBE and Lloyd Maepeza travelled to the United Kingdom to receive his knighthood. Sir Maepeza was the Speaker for the National Parliament for some years.

Gina had many periods of ill health and by 1976 gave up many activities because of illness. He died at Munda on 23 December 1981 with all his children at his side. He will always be remembered as one of the most outstanding early leaders of the Solomons' church, community and nation.

Mary Johnston (nee Gina)

Endnotes

1. The charges against Gina are explained in the Rev. George Carters book on Belshazzar Gina, Yours in His Service, pp.59-70. In a letter to AH Scrivin, the Rev. Goldie wrote, all that has been alleged against him ... will not stand up against a fair enquiry. Nonetheless, the Chairman of the Methodist District, the Rev. JR Metcalfe suspended him from ministry on the basis of these and other trumped-up charges.

2. The New Zealand Methodist Conference in 1992 passed the following resolution:

In the restoration of the Solomon Islands Church after the war no attempt was made to encourage Belshazzar Gina to resume his ministry and he was encouraged to make a career in the Civil Service. (Synod 1946 without discussion accepted the resignation of Gina.) There was no independent enquiry into the charges made against Gina for which he was imprisoned.

Conference now:

(a) acknowledges that he had a vision of an independent Solomon Islands Church controlling its own life and witness and telling the Good News of Jesus Christ in the imagery and context of Melanesia and he lived long enough to see some of that vision become reality.

(b) regrets that although Belshazzar Gina was the first ordained minister of the Methodist Church in 1938, he was not given the responsibilities to which he had been ordained (i. e. authority in the church or the right to conduct the Sacraments.)

(c) affirms the Rev. Belshazzar Gina as a pioneer in many government and community activities and as a Christian leader in church and community.

Endnotes by Alan Leadley (ed.)

Paula Havea

Tongan Missionary to the Solomons

Paula Havea grew up in a family that for two generations was rooted in the work of the church in Tonga. His grandfather, the Rev. Siotame Havea was amongst the first few local Wesleyan Church ministers of the mid nineteenth century. Siotame Havea was married to Tapaita and they had five children, of which the youngest was the only son, the Rev. Sione Havea, nicknamed Teukikolisi [*groomed for the College — i.e. Tupou College*]

Sione Havea was married to Mele Kauika of Kolomotu'a. They had five children, namely, Sela who was married to the titleholder Lutui of Tongo-lekaleka; Paula Havea; the Hon. Salisi Manoa Havea, who became Minister of Police; Tevita Havea, who was Senior Customs Officer; and Silivia, who was married to Tnoke Halafihi of Makave. Sione was again married to Lakai, a daughter of the chiefly Valu of 'Utulau, after the death of his first wife Mele. The children from his second marriage were 'Ungatea who was married to the Rev. Samiuela Fonua of Fo'ui, Nusipepa who died in her youth; and the Rev. Dr Sione 'Amanaki Havea.

When Paula Havea grew up, Sione had earned the status of being one of the most respected Tongan Wesleyan Ministers, both in education circles and in the work of the church. Sione was head tutor of Tupou College (1902— 1908, 1912-1941) and secretary of the Church (1925-1941). As much was invested in Paulas background, much was expected of him.

Paula Before the Solomons

Born at Tupou College, Tonga in 1897, Paula was physically strong, athletic, musical and intelligent. Both his primary and secondary education took place at Tupou College. He was a good scholar and was rated amongst the top students of his day. The most prestigious leaving examination of the time was the Tupou College Honour Board Examination and Paula Havea passed this examination in 1915. In the extra-curricular activities, he was very involved. He played a number of sports and was a member of the school brass band. After the college, he chose to work for the church and he was immediately made Assistant Teacher at the Tupou College's Primary School.

He married Tiaisaane Mosiana, daughter of Filimone Lilo and Mafi Lotofoa, Haapai in 1917.

In 1921, a deputation came from the Solomon Islands in which the Rev. John Goldie brought two Islanders to appeal for more missionaries from Tonga. When the party visited *Tatakamotonga*, they were welcomed into an almost empty church where only the elders had gathered. Paula had lined up the choir (virtually the whole congregation) at a distance to sing a few Psalms as they slowly marched towards the church. They stopped outside the church and sang more items as the crowd built up in

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numbers. They continued singing as they moved in to take their places in the church while they made the beating of the second *lali* [bell] from outside. So even before they started the meeting, the Spirit had made its presence felt through the sweetness of the music and the warmth of the welcome.

Off to the Solomons

Towards the end of 1921, the family of Paula, Mosiana and their two year old daughter 'Amelia, was amongst the party that left Tonga for the Solomons. Mosiana at the time was carrying her second child.

Having arrived in the Solomons, Goldie, well aware of Paula's ability as a teacher, wanted to keep Paula with him as an assistant teacher at the school at Kokeqelo. Paula, being a very patient and gentle person, was the students' favourite in no time. Besides Religious Studies and Christian Education, he taught English, Maths, History, Geography and Music.

After school, Paula would devote his time to pastoral work. He travelled to all villages of the Roviana Group. Amidst his busy working schedules, he always allowed time to work in his garden. He demonstrated through the success of his gardens, the skills that he brought from Tonga in growing the special yam, *Kaumeile*, the Swamp Taro and all the tropical vegetables. He produced good fruit from his labour in the garden, so also he reaped good spiritual harvest.

He taught various sports and games. He excelled in tennis, cricket and football. Paula taught music in Tongan notation and the choir harmonised beautifully. He used their traditional bamboo musical instruments for accompaniment. J H L Waterhouse was convinced that Paula could start a brass band with the College, so they did. In 1922, they established the first brass band in the group and it was very popular with all. Amongst those who learnt music and band through Paula was Belshazzar Gina, who was the first Solomon Islander to be appointed Conductor of the Government Police Brass Band.

Back for a while in Tonga

In 1933, Paula and his family were called back to Tonga for ministerial training. He left Tonga as an assistant teacher but while at Kokeqelo he was made a minister on probation, so it was necessary that he receive appropriate training before ordination. While in Tonga, he took the opportunity whenever possible to promote the needs for more Tongan missionaries to go overseas.

To the Solomons for the Second Time in 1936

When it was made known to the Solomons that Paula Havea was coming back, several requests came to Goldie for Paulas stationing. He was called to serve at Madou and the Vonavona group but before the end of his first year back, he was again required to be back at the College. A chief by the name of Isime'eli Ngatu, heard of Paula and his work, went straight to Goldie and requested that Paula be made the Head Missionary

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in the Marovo district. Ngatu was very much in favour of the Tongans after the work of Paula 'Iloahefaiva, who had worked in this district before he passed away in 1922.

Paula started at Marovo in 1936. Progress was made in the life of the church, in the children's education and in the community at large. He brought with him to Patutiva ministry gifts which he had exercised among the people and the community at Kokeqelo.

Alone during the War

With the Japanese invading the Solomon Islands, the missionaries were evacuated. Paula, a colleague from Tonga, Sione Afu and two Fijians chose to remain and look after the parishes. Paula and Ngatu organised the people to vacate their villages and move to the mountains where they dug hide-outs and built shelters. Paula then travelled from island to island in an open boat, sometimes with company, sometimes alone. His safety was always at high risk, but he would continue his routine visits. The locals were moved by his courage and determination. Sometimes when going between islands, he covered himself with coconut and banana leaves inside the canoe and allowed it to drift with the currents, while praying for his safety from American and Japanese air raids. His visits took him as far as the islands of the Western Province, New Georgia, Kolombangara, Vella Lavella, Simbo, Langola and Lauru (Choiseul). He conducted services, baptisms and funerals while the Americans and the Japanese were engaged in fierce fighting. The locals drew strength and found encouragement through Paula's timely messages and prayers. Not many people dared to travel during the War in the Solomons, so in most cases it was left to Paula to take messages around. He left a legacy with the people and long after he had left the Solomons, people still talked appreciatively of his love, care and devotion.

After the War, Paula visited his family in Tonga. He had an adopted Solomon child whom he named Parakana, son of Siotame 'Eto and Lavinia. When chief Ngatu learnt that Paula was to take Parakana, who was then only four years old to Tonga, he asked Paula to take his son Lupeni too. When Paula left, it was Sione Taufu and 'Amalani from Tonga that took over from him at Patutiva.

Stranger in his Homeland

Once settled in Tonga, Paula was assigned to work at Tupou College while he continued to publicise the need for people on the mission field. Lupeni was enrolled at the College. Parakana, still too young to enter primary school, was taken around relatives and friends as a star entertainer. Songs in his native Solomon tongue were favourites. He was taught to dance, and to recite poems, and took only a few weeks to become fluent in the Tongan language.

In 1948, the church in Tonga had managed to collect enough money to assist in the reconstruction of buildings damaged in the Solomons during the War. The Conference decided to send Paula with their gift of money. He went by himself, which meant that

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Lupeni and Parakana were left to the care of his brother Manoa, who was then a Police Magistrate in Ha'apai, Tonga.

Back in the Solomons for a third time, Paula was again taken back to Patutiva. Patutiva was where his heart really belonged. He could claim three generations of converts, grandparents, parents and children. He was a father figure who had a genuine authority and a very commanding respect in the community. He had earlier contracted malaria and often suffered severe sickness as a consequence. The situation with Mosiana and the rest of the family in Tonga however did not improve and he was required to return.

So in 1954, Paula returned to Tonga for good. Before he left, Chief Ngatu took him all over the little islands that he had served in his three terms. It was a very moving experience for it was a farewell to one who was never to come their way again.

Paula's Legacy

In November 1972, Paula was taken to hospital, where he died on 27 December 1972 at the age of 75. His funeral was conducted by a host of Wesleyan ministers led by the Rev. Tuipuloto Taumoeofau who was then the Superintendent Minister of the Tongatapu District.

Before Paula died, the Rev. Dr Sione 'Amanaki Havea, his youngest brother had become President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. Paula approached 'Amanaki with the hope of being given another chance to go back to the Solomons where he might spend his last days. 'Amanaki, a man ; of great vision and understanding, well aware of his brother's longing for the Solomons, argued against this wish and eventually 'Amanaki's wisdom prevailed. He convinced Paula that he was too old to do further work in the mission field, and that a better alternative would be to send someone from the family on his behalf. It was Parakana who ultimately fulfilled this wish when he went back in 1976, a Solomon/Tongan missionary to the Solomons. He cheerfully continued Paula's work. He had to start from scratch, for even though he was going back to his own people, he had forgotten the Solomon language. He could duplicate everything that Paula did, for he was good in the garden and at fishing. He was also musical and could compose Tongan dances, lakalaka and ma'ulu'ulu. It is fair to say that he took his father's work a step further when he was made a Bishop.

When the news of Paula's death reached the Solomons, a memorial service was held and a dormitory, 'Paula Havea was named in his memory at Goldie College.

Kepu Moa

Dora Rande Moata

Dora was born the eldest daughter of teacher Henry Moata, who came from Marovo, and Dorcas, who was a high-ranking Siwai. Siwai is a matrilineal society, which means that Dora was in direct line to become the matriarch of the family. Dora lived in Kuliro and Koau and, after the war, at Kihili Mission Station. She attended school from the age of five and was a bright, intelligent pupil, making the most of her opportunities and always giving of her best.

When the Kihili District Girls' School was opened by Sister Ada Lee in April 1956, Dora was a foundation pupil. This enabled her to extend herself. There was no longer any need to place limitations on herself in answering questions in class because the boys wouldn't like it, and no need to sit at the back of the class because the boys always sat at the front!



Dora Rande

Dora's curriculum was extended even further when Sister Beulah Reeves arrived at Kihili in 1957. Ada had always taught the girls handwork, sewing and cooking, but this was further extended with mothercraft, laundry work, and running women's meetings. Later on, games and activities for kindergarten-age children were added. At the end of her three years at Kihili, Dora remained on as a teacher. For a time it was also her responsibility to supervise the gardens, a thankless task in many ways as food was needed on a regular basis.

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Girls' Brigade New Zealand sent Miss Gebbie to Bougainville to train leaders and register the companies, and thus Dora's leadership in the Girls' Brigade commenced. The Brigade flourished, Dora was a good leader, had a good sense of humour, demanded high standards and lived up to them herself. She won the respect of both leaders and girls and was not afraid to reprimand when she felt it was needed.

Sister Pamela Beaumont tells of one of her many stays at Kihili. She lent Dora her small portable pedal organ, and, after giving her a few lessons from the hymnbook, Dora quickly learnt to play. Her innate ability was very evident.

Sister Beulah also had the responsibility for the School Choir, and the great event of the year was to attend the Kieta Choral Festival and to compete against all the other schools in Bougainville and Buka. Competition was fierce, but Dora had a natural talent musically. She gradually took over the training and conducting of the Choir for special Sunday Services, for entertainment at end of year functions and the Choral Festival. The Choir won a number of times under her baton, and her conducting gave the impression that the music flowed through her as she kept everyone in time.

When I commenced a Homecraft Teacher Training Course in 1964, Dora was one of the five young women who went through the course. She always showed initiative and was well prepared for classes.

Because of her mixed parentage she moved easily among the Solomon Island girls and the Buka — Bougainville girls. Her father had taken the family in 1950/51 to Marovo for about a year, so that they could meet their relatives and come to understand something of the culture that was part of their heritage. This gave Dora another view of life, which was invaluable in a school which included eighteen different language groups.

Dora had a warm, outgoing personality and an ability to converse in at least five languages. Her highborn status gave her standing in any situation, but it was not something which she took advantage of. She was always held in high esteem in her village of Kakotokori and though she seldom lived there, she was aware other responsibilities to her people.

When Dora was accepted by Gaulim Teachers Training College in Rabaul, she developed her teaching skills and learned to mix with other groups of Melanesian people. She was prominent with her musical skills, learning to play many different musical instruments. Always fluent in English, Dora wrote regularly to Pamela Beaumont when in Gaulim and maintained a correspondence with Ada Lee until Ada's death. As part of the Teachers' College Music Group, Dora toured through Australia entertaining and being billeted with Church folk. This gave Dora an even greater appreciation of European culture, while still retaining her Melanesian heritage.

After teacher training, Dora went to Newcastle, Australia to extend her musical career. She married Mr Leslie and settled in Australia. Recently she has helped people working on grammar for the Siwai language.

Pat Jacobson

Semisi Nau Pioneer Tongan Missionary

Semisi Nau (c. 1866-1927), the first Tongan to work for the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands (1905-1919), represents the best of Pacific Island missionary work in Melanesia. His family had a history of involvement in evangelistic outreach. His father, Sioeli, was a Tongan missionary in Fiji where he met and married 'Akosita. Two of Semisi's brothers, 'Apisai and Pita, were also missionaries.

In giving leadership, Semisi was particularly well equipped, reflecting the significant educational influence of Dr JE Moulton who was the founding headmaster of Tupou College in Tonga. In 1886, while he was a student at the College, Semisi was caught up in the bitter schism which split the Methodist Church. He was arrested and imprisoned for his loyalty to the Wesleyan Church and he went into exile to Fiji for three years. He returned to Tupou College in 1890 for two further years. For a time, he was a missionary teacher on the northern island of Niuafo'ou where his father was minister. Semisi was interested in going as a missionary to New Guinea but was turned down because he was unmarried.



Semisi Nau and Matelita

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Subsequently he married Matelita Tuliakiono and had two appointments on Tongatapu. This was an unsettling time with three of their four children dying in infancy.

Dr George Brown, General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Overseas Missions, selected Semisi as a missionary in 1902, but it was not until 1905 that Semisi, Matelita and their only child, 'Akosita, sailed for the Solomon Islands. Initially he worked at Kokeqelo.

Brown and Goldie had for several years been interested in expanding Methodist work to Ontongjava despite local opposition. Because Ontongjava was a Polynesian outlier, Polynesian missionaries were thought particularly suitable to learn the people's language and culture.

In 1906, Semisi and his Samoan colleague, Pologa, went to Ontong Java. For the first three months they lived in a whaleboat in the lagoon, unable to land because of the hostility of Keapea, the chief of Luangiua, and the people. Influenza, possibly introduced unwittingly by the mission, had a devastating impact on the population.

Semisi's approach at Ontong Java was to win the confidence of the chiefs and the people and to introduce the *Lotu*, the way of worship which had reshaped his own life and that of his people in Tonga. Eventually they were successful in landing, first at the northern village of Pelau and then at Luangiua. When Goldie visited one year later, he reported that three large churches had been built, and *almost every person in the group... [was] anxious to place himself under instruction.*

Goldie replaced Semisi in 1909 with an inexperienced Australian probationer, Ernest Shackell. This was to counter the threat of Catholic competition and also reflected a lack of trust in the leadership of Polynesian missionaries. Semisi was stationed at Vona Vona and transferred in 1910 to Mundi Mundi and then to Dovele on Vella Lavella.

Shackell's confrontational approach caused so much trouble that in December 1910 he was deported from Ontongjava by Charles Woodford, the British Resident Commissioner. The Methodist work at Ontongjava was in danger of collapse. It was rescued by the intervention of George Brown who secured Semisi's return in 1911. Semisi and the Methodist supporters at Luangiua, however, faced opposition and persecution from Keapea and a European trader.

From August 1912 to February 1914 Semisi was on leave and during his time in Tonga he successfully recruited others as missionaries. On his return to the Solomons he was ordained, a mark of the esteem in which he was held.

Under Pologa's leadership, the situation on Ontong Java had deteriorated. This led to a government investigation, Pologa was removed and the offending trader was ordered to leave. For most of his remaining ministry, until he retired in 1919, Semisi worked with a faithful remnant although things did improve following the death of Keapea in 1917. The Methodist Mission never replaced Semisi and in 1933 the Melanesian

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Brotherhood of the Melanesian Mission began work at Ontong Java and the people became Anglicans.

Semisi was one of the few missionaries to record in some detail his life story. He also acted as an anthropological informant, giving interesting descriptions of the people's religious beliefs and society. George Brown thought highly of Semisi, describing him as *a most intelligent Tongan*, and citing him in his book, *Melanesians and Polynesians*.

Semisi's faith was a simple one, seen above all in his description of his ninety-seven days in the whale boat:

If it was to be life it was Jesus or if death Jesus only; if we wanted a drink it was Jesus only or if we were hungry Jesus only or if the sail was torn it still was Jesus only.

Questions can be raised about the wisdom of Goldie in exposing missionaries to risk of injury or death on a remote coral atoll far away from the missionary headquarters. The heroic dimension of Semisi and Pologa's saltwater sojourn, however, fitted the missionary imagination of their day, and in dramatic presentations has continued to excite people's interest. Semisi was a change agent who was at the forefront of missionary expansion into a very vulnerable society resisting change.

While he was a faithful servant of the mission, Semisi was not uncritical of John Goldie's leadership. David Hilliard points to the way in which Goldie during Semisi's ministry had become too closely identified with the *excitement of controversy with the government, protection of the islanders against immoral and unscrupulous traders, and the dramatic persecution of the Christian remnant*. While Goldie's abandonment of Ontong Java was a pragmatic response to its remoteness and declining population, it was a betrayal of Semisi and Matelita's devoted and sacrificial service.

After his return to Tonga in 1919, Semisi undertook appointments in Nukualofa, Niuafu'ou and 'Utalau. He acted as translator during Goldie's visit to Tonga in 1921.

Two months before he died, Semisi wrote to his friend and former missionary colleague, William Leembruggen, giving a testimony to the faith which had sustained him throughout his life:

I am very sick and weak. I'm still following Christ as my personal Saviour. Believe and trust in Him so that he would bless you as well as our people here in Tonga. We will meet each other in heaven.

Leembruggen wrote of Semisi:

I saw the love lit chivalrous face, his spontaneous politeness, his heroic devotion to duty. I heard his prayers rise up like a fierce fountain to God.

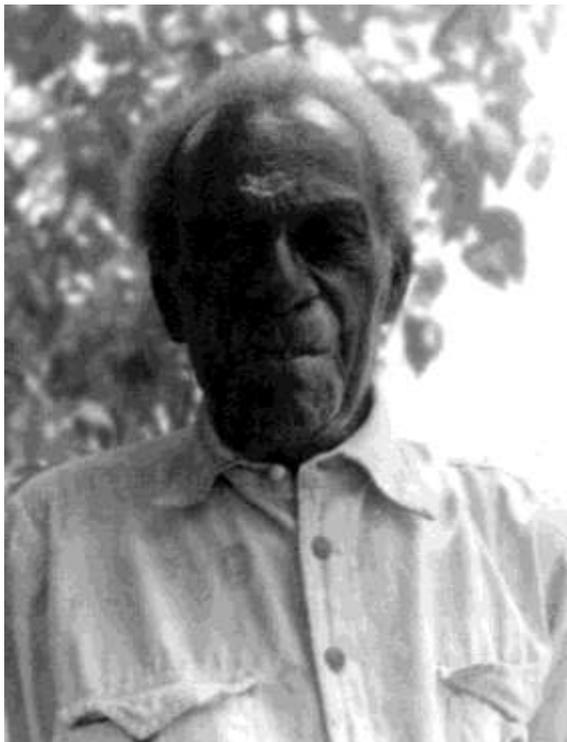
According to Goldie, *He loved greatly, and he was beloved by us all*. The humanity and faith of Semisi Nau shine through his life and his writing.

Allan K Davidson

David Pausu

The Peacemaker in South Bougainville

On Papua New Guinea's National Day, 14 September 1970, David Pausu the peacemaker slipped confidently from this life to the next. Sounds of mourning grew louder as I approached but at the bush house the noise was deafening. The older people were wailing and the toddlers were howling in terror at the uproar. After a prayer of thanksgiving they began the funeral preparations. Solomon needed a wooden case to make his father's coffin. Mary Noose, David's wife, dressed him in his shorts. Hega, his daughter, prepared the house cook to receive the streams of mourners that were to come through that day and night. Edna, David's eldest grandchild, who was home from Kihili Girls' School, was heartbroken and seemed to be the chief mourner. Kompaka was able to show her that Christians need not mourn like that for such as David, as though he were lost to us forever. He got her to put a hymnbook and a Bible by David's head and tried to organize singing and Bible reading to quieten the noise of mourning. Messages went out every-where on the drums that David had died. David Pausu, the courageous peacemaker who came as a missionary to Tonu in 1917, had died.



David Pasau

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Next morning the coffin was placed in the Tonu church while the school children were singing. People crowded in and heard the newly translated Gospel of John chapter 11 read and copies were distributed. We read II Timothy 4:6-8 and everyone was invited to take a flower as we followed the coffin to the grave, which had been dug in the place of honour next to John Kauma who had called David to Tonu. The Rev. Samson Pataaku read the graveside words and prayers and announced that David had asked that the old funeral customs be set aside. Another man confirmed this and it was decided to have a Memorial service on the Sunday instead.

At the Memorial Service nine men from different places spoke about David's life, and the following story is based on their reports.

Around 1880 David was born by a stream in Rataiku, Siwai, and abandoned by his mother. His father's other wife found the baby and cared for him. Mokosi was angry because a possible warrior had been left to die. A while later his village was attacked and many were killed, but David went to live with his grandfather Wainasu in Turungung. One day Hihisa came from Matukori to exchange items for galip nuts. As he didn't have enough for the transaction Wainasu gave David to Hihisa as part of the price. Hihisa later sold him to Kisare at Tonu for shell money. David was later taken against Kisare's wishes, to Mono Island where Ninamo looked after him.

Some years later Mr Norman bought David from Ninamo for his plantation which was run by Lever Brothers. He became storekeeper for Mr Norman and travelled with him to Gizo and other places in the Solomon Islands such as Rendova and Gabotu near Tulagi. On his journeys David saw the good work being done by missionaries at Roviana and wanted to go to school. Back at Mono he found that a Tongan teacher named Willie Paonga had arrived and David was able to attend his school. During 1912 and 1913 David went to Fauro with a teacher, Samson Poti, to help to bring people into the Lotu. When he returned to Mono, Mr Goldie arrived and gave him the opportunity to go to school at Kokegolo.

While he was at school, Peuhai, who had come to Harinai in Siwai in 1916, sent a message to Mr Goldie saying that Kauma, headman of Tonu, wanted a teacher. Mr Goldie asked for volunteers to go to 'darkest Bougainville' and David said he would go.

David came to Tonu in 1917 and stayed in Kauma's drum house. Continual fighting made life very difficult but David tried every way he could to bring peace. Kauma didn't want to let him speak to his enemy headmen in case he was killed but David assured him that his God would look after him. When David was finally allowed to visit the enemy Lempo, he took two schoolboys with him. They prayed and then David took his Bible and courageously went towards the armed man. Lempo was taken by surprise, and David was reported as saying that the people of Bougainville were one people and one language and should stop fighting. When Kauma and the other Siwai people heard what had happened, they began to believe that God was a God who desired peace and an end to all the fighting.

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One day David met the Roman Catholic pastor from Amio on the road. This man had a shell on his forehead and was carrying a spear. David told him that this was no way to stop the fighting. He should wear the cross and tell people about Christ, and carry a Bible not a spear, David said.

David went back to Kisare at Tonu and helped him make peace with his enemies. He said that the wars would end and that one day they would see large numbers of white people and that there would be a wide cleared road where people would walk about freely. That road was finished about the time of David's death and people remembered what he had said.

David helped to open up many areas including Pikei and Nagavisi. When the Rev. Harry and Mrs Beryl Voyce came to Tonu in 1926, David went to Mihero and opened up many more villages to the Gospel influence.

In 1932 David went to Duisei and it was there that Reuben Monori learned to love Jesus Christ. David was still at Duisei when the Americans bombed that village on 3 December 1942. The people all ran to the bush. David stayed near Mokorino with his wife Mary Noose and his children, Solomon Anunga and Hega Tapua. David was sure that God helped him wonderfully during this difficult time.

After the war David came to live at Tonu and 'retired' but remained very active in walking about, gardening, visiting people and helping to translate the Bible. His daughter, Hega, married Muttons son, Kauma, and one of their children, David Damete, is carrying on David's good work.

Pamela Beaumont

John Pirah The Mountain Climbing Missionary

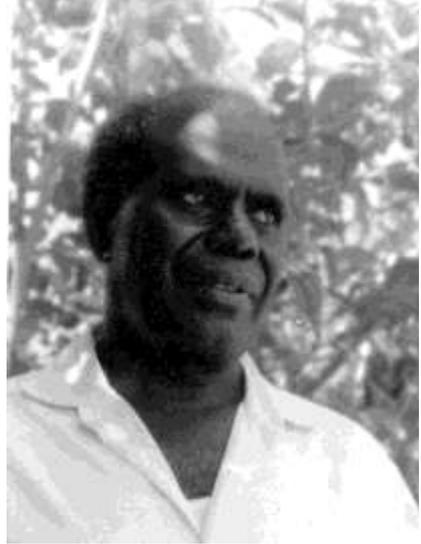
John Pirah was born into a fearful and sullen world. Families were isolated in separate hamlets with private pathways, gardens and hunting grounds, territory forbidden to all others. Women had to hide themselves so that they could not be seen by men from other families. Protection of land and women, through whom the land is passed down, was the main cause of killings.

At the time John was born, the German *kiap* exercised power through police and guns. People were forced to build line houses and if they wished to claim land they were required to maintain a road through it. Only when a patrol was due did the people come together at their line houses. Most of their lives continued to be spent in family seclusion in small houses built in their gardens.

John was born amongst the boulders of the Pipiru River on 22 March 1917 and abandoned. His father, Keja, had gone to work for the Government in Kieta and Rabaul. John's mother, Uuma, was instructed by the *buwa* man, "because you have no husband, kill the baby or else I'll kill you". In fear she obeyed, but returned home by way of the house of Miriam and Paul Sai, the newly arrived missionaries at nearby Harinai Village. Miriam knew there had been a birth. She rushed to the riverside and, guided by the baby's crying, gathered him up as her own.

Miriam Sai and another Miriam (the wife of another missionary Peuhai,) cared for the baby in his early months. Not long after John was accepted back by Uuma, she died. His father returned and took two new wives. Meanwhile John had become happy at Sunday Lotu, so Keja took him to enjoy the singing. In 1922 Miriam Sai asked Keja if John could stay with her and start school. John says:

I became a true part of the Sai family and learnt to speak their Roviana language. In 1928 Miriam and Paul were returning home to the Solomon Islands and but for government regulations would have taken me with them. Instead I went to Tonu Mission Station and came under the care of Mr & Mrs Voyce. Once I ran away [from] home, but soon returned and completed four years schooling.



John Pirah

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John travelled with the Voyces and for two years lived at the new station of Teop. He later crossed the mountains to the Kieta side and helped establish a church there. John Pirah was the first fruits of the pioneer missionary work by people such as Miriam and Paul Sai. *I have been taught and trained in Christian living from my birth*, he said. After eighteen months in the Kieta village in 1936, John was invited to go to the pastor/teacher training school at Roviana. He went with eighteen Bougainville young men for the three-year course. Paul and Miriam were there and John was familiar with the Roviana language.

In 1939 he made his home in the mountains at the village of Sulekuna in the Uisai area. During the war, he and his people were reduced to eating the pith of the sago palm. When the Allied forces landed at Torokina, John and other mission-trained men walked through the enemy lines and worked in the offices and stores for the troops.

From January 1946 John pastored the Uisai villages. He was appointed to the Circuit School at Koau under George Carter, and met Ruth Mohe. On 2 October 1949 they were married. John and Ruth were among several who volunteered for the very new mission area of the Papua New Guinea High-lands, and, together with Alpheus Alekera and his wife Eileen Soper from the Solomons, they were chosen to serve God and the Church in this area.

So remote and isolated was the area than no one had preached the Gospel to the Tari people before January 1953. They were pit sawing timber, building houses, planting gardens, and learning another language as part of the work of evangelism. John and Alekera started a school and became the first teachers in the Hull language. Ruth and Eileen worked hard amongst the Hull women. Four years on in 1957 they came home to Harinai for their first holiday. John spent most of the following months walking around Bougainville telling the story of how the Gospel had spread. Many more volunteered to go where they had been. Tragically, the illness of one of their children who eventually died delayed their return for four years. During that time John was pastor to his own people at Harinai.

In 1962 John, Ruth and their three children returned to the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and continued the work at Hull where over four years fifteen churches and pastor's houses were built. John said:

They were very happy years. In 1964 after four years we returned to Siwai where I was appointed Catechist to the Harinai area. Eight years later at the Synod of 1972I retired and Bishop John Taufu presented a long service certificate for thirty five years of serving God and the Church.

John Pirah continued to support the minister and in 1984 encouraged the people to build a memorial church called the 'Shadrach Peuhai and Paul Sai Memorial Church' at Hokuha village close to Harinai. As John Wesley saw himself as a brand plucked from a burning building, so John Pirah would say, *I was a babe gathered up from drowning.*

Phil Taylor



John Pirah and Ruth Mohe with Naula, Silas and baby Niven

Isaac Pitakomoki Gifted Medical Worker

Isaac Pitakomoki came from the Bubukuana village in the Varisi area of Choiseul. The Babatana people took him to be a slave in the village of Dara. He was just a small child when he was taken during an intertribal fight. After some years, while he was still a small boy, he went to Kokeqelo, staying there for about ten years.

At Roviana he went to school and was trained in medical work by Sister Lillian Berry. He was a very keen and apt pupil and Sister Lillian remembered him many years later in New Zealand as one other best trainees.

After his training he went to Bougainville on the Tandanya, arriving on 15 December 1929. The Rev. Harry and Mrs Beryl Voyce were living at Tonu at this time, and the work of the church was growing steadily.



Isaac Pitakomoki

Isaac began medical work at Tonu and also helped the people with preaching and teaching. Stephen, his son, says he remembers how his father taught his children to pray and to learn Bible stories and verses.

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Remembering these early days, Mr Voyce wrote about Isaac:

We always held Isaac in very high esteem for from the very first he made a profound impact medically on the life of the Siwai people, and became a sort of figure of healing to them. Not only to the native people... He often played physician to my father and my family and we know that we owe the life of Murray to his ministrations, and my father had great faith in Isaac — the doctor supreme — a good bedside manner and with it all a fine Christian spirit.

Never will I forget in one very severe earthquake period that word came down from a mountain area that the wife of Silas Senu (a woman from the Marovo lagoon area) had been thrown from her house verandah and broken both her legs. Isaac was able to meet the crisis calmly and brought her to the Tonu hospital and cared for her lovingly, and the Senu family served for many more years in Siwai.

John Pirah adds that Isaac opened the hospital to everyone. John says that his life and that of a man who fell out of a tree were saved with Isaac's care.

Isaac married Nancy Para, whose sister Dorcas married Henry Moata from Marovo. Isaac and Nancy's children are Stephen Gandapeta, Jean Wei, Isaac Pehkoro, Alexander, Nathan and Ruth. They all made their own contributions in Bougainville and Choiseul.

During the Pacific war Isaac and his family lived in hiding in the bush. Even though they were very hungry, he didn't forget about God, but encouraged his family to trust God and to keep Sunday as a holy day. After the War he went to Pikei and worked there for seven years. He served for three years at Roreinang before retiring to Kakotokori (his wife's village), where he served as a local preacher until he died on 29 October 1971. Isaac was preaching up to the time of his death and before he died he told his children to "... look after the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

Isaac Pehkoro has followed his father's footsteps in medicine in Madang and Arawa. When rebels, during the Bougainville crisis, smashed Jacob Neewai's cheek and jaw, leaving him without medical help for some weeks, Isaac found him and was able to repair some of the damage so that Neewai can now eat and speak.

Tonu Hospital has been a centre of healing, apart from the period of the Pacific war and recent times of upheaval. Many local men and women have served in Tonu as medical orderlies, nurse aids, nursing sisters, dentists and malaria control technicians, together with a number of dedicated overseas staff. Praise to God for all God has done through his devoted servants, Isaac and Nancy.

Pamela Beaumont

Iula (Ula) Qilanoba

First Solomon Islands Deaconess

Ula Qilanoba was surely one of the most remarkable women from the Island of Choiseul. Lacking any opportunity for secondary or tertiary education, she was yet a born leader and succeeded in whatever she undertook. I first met Ula in 1948, when she came to the Sisters' House, Sasamuqa to complete her primary education, which had been interrupted by World War II. She was then in her late teens. Ula quickly reached and passed Standard 7, the only girl at that time to do so. She was the recognised leader in the Girls' Boarding School, as well as its choir mistress. After finishing school, Ula stayed on helping in the house and kitchen, getting valuable experience in the maternity ward, children's nursery and medical clinic. She became a very practical nurse and midwife, even to the extent of delivering and caring for premature twins in a distant village one Christmas. She also taught school for several years. She often accompanied me on medical trips round Choiseul, or in trips further afield.

On one occasion, Ula accompanied me on a day trip to Kariki, in the Shortlands group on the *MV Cecily*. It was a journey of several hours. The trip to Kariki was calm, but on the return trip, we ran into the notorious tidal rips, which flow between the Shortlands and Choiseul. Every so often Ula would appear, make sure I was all right and haul in a fish. We caught twelve huge kingfish that afternoon, each nearly a metre long.

Ula was also as competent with a canoe as any man. Women on Choiseul do not use canoes much on their own. Ula is the only woman I know to whom the men have deferred, and the only one I have seen acting as steersman in a crew mostly of men. Once a party of us was returning from Poroporo, in Choiseul Bay to Liuliu, across six miles of in-shore reef. The reef was easily navigable by canoe at high tide, but now the tide was going out. We were running late and left Poroporo beach at sunset. In a very short time it was so dark that we could barely make out the coastline. But Ula knew where we were every part of the way. She knew when it was safe to start the outboard motor, when to paddle, and when to get out and drag the canoe. We arrived back at Liuliu without touching a stone or a lump of coral.

In 1963, it was decided to form a Deaconess Order in the Solomon Islands Methodist Church. Ula was the first applicant and began her training with the first group of Deaconess students. After a year's training at Goldie College under the Rev. Jim Cropp, she did her probationary year at Kokeqolo under the supervision of Mrs Nancy Carter, loved and respected by people and church leaders alike. From Roviana she went to Simbo, and after some time there, she went as Minister's supply to Mono Circuit. She worked voluntarily for a year under the Order of St Stephen. When a minister became available for Mono, Ula returned to Choiseul.

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A vacancy occurred at Lale, on the island of Ranonga. It seemed impossible to fill this position with either minister or male catechist, but Ula, hearing of the problem, immediately volunteered to fill the vacancy. This she did for about two years.

Returning again to Choiseul, Ula was appointed as Catechist to take charge of Katupika section, which at that time had no minister. With authority from the Church to administer the sacraments, and from the Government to conduct marriages, she was well equipped to take charge of this isolated section. She was much more active than any male Catechist had been, regularly paddling her small canoe to all of her six scattered villages, preaching, giving pastoral care, caring for the sick, baptising children, conducting marriages, leading the section meetings. On a number of occasions she paddled her canoe forty miles to Sasamuqa, either for special occasions, or to discuss section prob-lems, receive help or advice. She kept her section records and statistics scrupulously. So much was her leadership appreciated by the Katupika people, that they were loath to let her go, and she remained in the section for seven years.

When Ula finally retired she returned to her home village of Poroporo in the north, near Choiseul Bay, but continued voluntarily all her activities in the church, assisting the minister who had two sections to cover, and attending section and circuit meetings. She had a good deal of ill health in the last years of her life, and died in 1998, aged seventy years, remembered and honoured through-out the Solomon Islands Region of the United Church.

Lucy H Money



Clary Leadley, Iula Qilanoba & John Bitibule

Simon and Varosi Rigamu Faithful Pastors

When Simon Rigamu died on 7 October 1988, it was the end of a long and illustrious chapter in the story of the Church in the Teop Circuit. His father, Mano, had invited the Methodist missionaries to come to Teop, in 1922.

The first missionaries to be sent to Teop on Bougainville were the Fijians Eroni Kotosoma and his wife Loata. They lived in a house at Vapahan belonging to Mano, just across the water from Teop Island. When Mano and his wife went to their garden, they paddled across to Vapahan and left their small son Varop, now known as Rigamu, with them.

This small lad learned the stories of Jesus, and to read and write. Eventually a school was started in the village.

Later, Eroni and Loata were able to move across to Teop Island. When Rigamu was baptised, he was given the name of Simon.



Simon Rigamu

When he grew up, he became a pastor/teacher and was sent to Roviana in the Solomon Islands for his training. Before leaving, he and Varosi were married. Their life together was part of an important witness to the Christian faith. Their first child, Ruth Sima, was born at Roviana. Simon was the first Teop person to be appointed as a Catechist. All his life he was a leader among his people and the people of Bougainville Island.

Rigamus own words, from some of his writings:

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During the war, in the year 1942, the Government sent a letter to the Europeans working on their stations saying, 'You must leave your work and go up into the bush because the enemy, [the Japanese Forces] have already arrived in Bougainville,' but the Rev. D C Alley, thinking of his people in the Teop Circuit, did not go, although all the others did.

Don Alley was ordered by the authorities to leave straight away, but he went only to Namatoa for a week. He returned to Teop on the Wednesday so that he could take the Good Friday service. The following day he was contacted by a Mr Urban, a plantation owner who was of Austrian nationality. Don Alley wanted to accompany the man to his plantation so asked Rigamu to find two men to paddle them in a canoe. Rigamu replied that it was not a good time to be going any distance. Don Alley said that they would return at two o'clock. As they set off, two warships suddenly appeared. The people on the island quickly fled to the hills.

There was nowhere for the people in the canoe to hide. They were ordered on board the warship and taken before an officer. Mr Urban produced papers to say he was German and was allowed to go free, but Don Alley was tied up.

The warship pulled into the island, and the only two Teop people still there, Rigamu and Busiana, had climbed a tree because over one hundred Japanese soldiers had arrived on the island, and they were frightened for their lives. The soldiers were guarding Don Alley as he was taken to his house to collect a few things like pyjamas, his shaver and some clothes to help him while he was in prison. Rigamu wrote:

When he [Don Alley] was walking along the road with the soldiers he whistled to attract our attention so when I heard him, I climbed down from the tree and went to him. I was not allowed to talk to him, nor he to me, but he spoke a few words to me when I was helping him to collect his things, like this - 'You must be strong in the Lotu.... Don't be frightened to conduct the services.... Tell the teachers to work well in the Lotu.... Tell my friends to stick to the Lotu, and you, Rigamu, must look after everything, the pastors, teachers and all the people.

On the way back to the ship they asked to be allowed to pray together. They were eventually allowed to go into the church building, but it was full of soldiers who laughed as they prayed. When they had finished they shook hands and went out to the ship where they said their last farewells.

The people slowly came back to Teop Island and services started again, but after two and a half months there was a lot of fighting on the beaches, on the sea and in the air, so the people again fled to the bush. A temporary church was built and services were held, but there was much sickness and death as well as hunger. Rigamu cared for his people by giving medicines and tending sores. When the medical supplies ran out, he sent a note to the Australian soldiers who were patrolling in the bush, and medicines were dropped by air to the Teop people. The whole of Bougainville now appeared to

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be in Japanese hands, so the people returned to their island, as there seemed to be nowhere else to hide.

It was as though we were prisoners but the Japanese allowed us to continue Lotu and some Japanese soldiers who were Christians joined us too. But the war was getting stronger and everyone was frightened because there were guns and bombs and other things which killed people.

In the midst of their fear Rigamu received a letter from Mr Read, the government officer who was hiding in the bush. The letter read:

You, Rigamu, must bring the people up to the bush because in November the Americans are coming to fight the Japanese.

The people were concerned as to how they could escape off the island, but two days later the Japanese captain told them all to run away to the hills because tomorrow there was going to be a lot of fighting. Over two hundred sick or wounded Japanese came to join their group as they travelled around the mountain range, but food and medicines soon ran out. Many Teop people as well as Japanese died.

After many more troubles, the people eventually reached Torokina where the Allied army base had been set up. While they were in the bush, there had been skirmishes with Japanese soldiers who fought with grenades and machine guns. The people became very depressed. They had no bush knives to make shelters from the rain, and they were hungry and cold. Rigamu left them and walked over the mountain range until he reached the American soldiers and reported the condition of his people. Word was sent to Torokina for help. Rigamu was given food to take back, and help soon arrived.

When the people had rested for one week, I took 100 people, men, women and children, over Bougainville to Torokina. When we arrived there I went to Major Read and reported the troubles of the people and everything they had suffered. When we had rested a week. Major Read gave us a house so we could hold Lotu and we were also given work to do.

In 1945 when the war had finished, the people were allowed to return to rebuild their villages. The army supplied food until the gardens grew again.

In 1947, Rev. AH Voyce wrote to me and told me to build a house at Keksu for the minister who was coming to us. We were not finished when the Rev. T [Trevor] Shepherd and his wife and Sister Merle Carter arrived. Then at last the Ekalesia was fully standing up in the Teop Circuit.

Rigamu continued to be a great leader in the Church, and was present to welcome the Rev. Eroni Kotosoma and many others who came to celebratethe Golden Jubilee of the Church at Teop.

Audrey Bruce



Easter study led by Simon Rigamu, 1954

Nathan Sipisong **A Courageous Pastor, Teacher and Missionary**

Bougainville was invaded by the Japanese during the Second World War as they advanced towards the Solomons and Guadalcanal. Many heroic stories are told of the Coastwatchers who remained in these islands living in the bush and radioing to the Allied Forces information about the shipping and troop movements of the Japanese as they advanced from their headquarters at Rabaul on New Britain.

These Coastwatchers were ably assisted in their work by loyal Bougainvillians and Solomon Islanders who stayed with them and helped them in their task.

One such person was Nathan Sipisong, a man from the Siwai area in Bougainville, who was training to be a teacher and pastor at the Methodist Mission at Munda in the Solomon Islands.



Nathan Sipisong 1956, teacher at Matukori

This is his story, with Nathan's own words in italics.

I was at Munda in the Solomon Islands when war came to our homeland, yet my home village is Hanong in Siwai. How had I come to be there, you ask?

When I was a small boy I went to Lotu [worship service] in the Methodist Church with my family. After a short time at the village school I went away down the coast to Bum. On the Mission Station at Kihili there was a very good school and I wanted to learn more than the village school could teach me. The year was 1936

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In 1939 I was promoted to the top class and my teacher was Sister Ada Lee from New Zealand ...I worked hard and sat my examinations and had a good report on my behaviour, and when the time came it was announced that there would be places for seven students at the pastor/ teacher training college at Munda. Two would be from Buka, two from Teop, and three from Siwai. I was chosen and I was very pleased and excited as we travelled down to Munda, just before Christmas.

It was 1940 when the school year started. War news was listened to each week on the radio by the staff and students, but the battles were being fought on the other side of the world, and the war was between Germany and Britain.

At the end of 1941 the students learned of Japans entry into the War, and in January 1942 bombs were dropped on Rabaul, New Guinea. Most of the European and Pacific Island people in Bougainville and the Solomons were ordered to go to Australia by whatever means possible, and most of the Solomon Island students went back to their home islands by canoe. The fourteen students from Bougainville were unlucky. The Japanese were already on their island.

We stayed on the Mission Station, then three European missionaries came from Choiseul and Vella Lavella. They were Rev. JR Metcalfe, the Rev. AWE Silvester and Sister Merle Farland, a nurse. Mr Metcalfe said, 'Let us continue our school and college until the Japanese land here.' So we continued our schoolwork under the care of Mr Metcalfe.

One evening after work we were washing when we saw four Japanese barges entering Munda Bay Passage. They landed at the Mission headquarters. We saw hundreds of enemy soldiers marching up and down and spoiling all the buildings. That same night we ran away into the bush.

The three expatriate missionaries and the young men travelled by canoe down the coast and to other islands nearby. There they joined up with the Coastwatchers.

After a while Simon Donguhoring and I joined the Coastwatchers.

We stayed with two white men, one was American and one was from Australia. We hid with a big wireless. Every day that we saw enemy ships, barges and guns we reported to the white men and they sent reports on the wireless to New Hebrides or Guadalcanal.

Then the Allied planes came over and dropped bombs on enemy positions. We did this until the Americans landed at Munda on New Georgia in 1943.

After the landing, the previous District Officer of the Western Solomon Islands sent orders to all the villagers on the nearby islands to come to Munda to work with the army as a Labour Battalion.

Nathan Sipisong had been working in the cemetery contingent for three weeks when a message arrived from the Australian headquarters on Guadalcanal asking the

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whereabouts of the fourteen young men from Bougainville. If they had survived the Japanese invasion they were to be sent to Guadalcanal by aeroplane the next day. They were to be trained as soldiers and join the American forces to fight the Japanese on their own island.

We were told, 'Be brave and fight for your island. Save your people. They are in great difficulties. Many have died of hunger in the bush because the Japanese stole their food and spoiled their gardens.

The fourteen, which included Joel Lampo as well as Simon Donguhoring and Nathan Sipisong, flew south to Guadalcanal next morning. It was a frightening experience for none had ever flown before, but after a safe journey they landed and were met by an American Military Policeman who took them to the Australian Naval headquarters. There they met up with two Fijian Ministers of the Mission staff, the Revs Usaia Sotutu and Eroni Kotosoma, some other Bougainville and New Guinea men and some Australians who had been Government Officers before the war.

The Commander said, 'You are the first people who will go by submarine as spies [to reconnoitre] before the American Marines. You will leave here on the 24 October [1943] because the American, Australian and New Zealand troops will be landing on the 1st of November.' They gave us guns, uniforms, grenades and haversacks and many other things

Nathan and the others were taught how to fire guns and to throw grenades. On 24 October they boarded a destroyer and sailed for Tulagi Harbour which was the submarine base. There they were given more training -swimming, diving and paddling rubber boats.

After this they put tickets on our haversacks and guns. The Captain of the submarine said, 'We will leave here at six o'clock this evening. Two other submarines will go first — they are our protection from enemy submarines.' At about 5 o'clock all the big battleships saluted us by firing their big guns. At 6 o'clock the Captain said that everyone must get inside the submarine. This was 24 October 1943.

Inside the submarine they divided us. One group to sleep on the deck, and the other group to sleep in the stern. On the deck were six big torpedoes near the place we used as a workshop. In the middle was our mess where we ate our three meals and two cups of coffee each day. I say that the food inside the submarine was better than the land food. We travelled for two days. We arrived at Torokina [Empress Augusta Bay] about four p.m. The place where we anchored was between Keriaka and the Laruma River. We waited under the sea until about seven thirty p.m. then the submarine came up from the bottom of the ocean. Before we got into our rubber boats the captain inspected the beach and bush by spyglass to see if any Japanese were there.

The first group went. The second was my group. Then the third boat and the fourth came. We went down to the beach in order.

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We did not know where we were going, but followed a compass course. For two nights we slept without a fire, and no smoking or cooking of food. We ate only tinned food. On the third day we reached the bottom of a mountain. In this place we found some people of Puruata Village. They had run away from the Japanese. We asked them if the enemy was nearby. Then we bound them because we did not want them to go and tell the Japanese about us.

The group climbed the mountain (Malabeta Hill?) where they cleared some bush and set up camp. They made shelters from the leaves of the wild banana plant, with a separate one for the radio.

It was by now 31 October, the day before the landing. A radio report was sent to Guadalcanal telling of their safe arrival at the lookout post, and they were now ready to watch for enemy shipping or aircraft coming from Rabaul.

On 1st November 1943, American Marines and Army and some New Zealanders landed at Torokina. There was heavy fighting on this day. Battleships shelled the land. Planes were dropping bombs everywhere on the coast and in the bush. Warships were fighting on the sea and planes fighting in the air. This day was a terrible day on Bougainville.

On 2nd November we left the mountaintop and went down. We followed a track to a small village and we spent three nights there. From this village, Mr Keenan and Sotutu sent Kungkang and I to go and spy out a village called Kareana The people said there were no Japanese there. So we reported this to Mr Keenan and Sotutu. Next day we all moved to Kareana and made our camp there.

After a month of sporadic fighting with Japanese soldiers, Sipisong's group made it back to Torokina. Twelve of the group decided to stay with the AIB (Australian Infantry Brigade), but Nathan Sipisong and Nathan Kiha worked in the ANGAU (Australia, New Guinea Administrative Unit) hospital at Lauruma near the Roman Catholic Mission station at Morotona until word was received of the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

... The Americans had dropped a bomb on Hiroshima City

The War was over, but Nathan was not discharged from his hospital work until 1947.

By that time, the Rev. Harry Voyce had come back to Bougainville and called all of the local teachers and pastors to a meeting at Marau near Motopena Point. Nathan was appointed as pastor/teacher to his people in Buin, then in Siwai in South Bougainville.

In 1960, the area around Mendi, Tari and Nipa in the New Guinea Highlands was being opened up. A call went out for pastors and teachers to go to the Highlands. Sipisong and JW Pinoko, Samson Taming, John Anggelo, Levi Pahunavae, Scotter and Mary Bo and others left their homes to go to a people whose way of life was so different from their own.

Audrey Bruce

Lester & Maybent Sogabule Effective Workers for the Gospel

There is always an element of sacrifice and danger in the missionary calling. A tradition of such devotion has always been present among Solomon Island Christians. Even before going to the Solomons, I was aware of the importance of those who left their own islands to help establish the work in Bougainville. Some married and settled down on that island, and I was later privileged to meet two of these men of faith, Henry Moata of Marovo Lagoon and Luke Zaie of Choiseul.

As I worked at Goldie College and in the Roviana Circuit, I also soon got to hear of John Teu who was among the first Solomon Islanders to serve in the New Guinea Highlands. He was at the forefront of pioneering work in Nipa which commenced in December 1959. Just before John's return to Roviana, I was sent to Hapai at the far end of the Lagoon to bring back to Munda his two eldest lads who were in the care of relatives. When revisiting the Solomons in 1994, I was delighted to meet up with one of those sons. Luke Teu had become headmaster of Kokeqolo Primary School on the Mission headquarters at Munda.

Other Solomon Islanders followed John Teu's fine example. One of these was Lester Sogabule, who trained at Goldie College before offering to serve together with his wife Maybent (May) in the Highlands. Lester came from one of the most isolated villages, Kariki on the island of Fauro, situated on the Solomons side of the boundary between Bougainville and the Shortlands Group.

Lester and Maybent proved to be effective workers in the Highlands.

Somewhere near where Lester was working among the Highland people a tragic road accident took place. A truck driven by a coastal person hit a small child who died from the injuries. The strong and rigid system of 'pay-back' applied. Revenge must be sought. The driver had been whisked away. As Lester had a dark skin and was from the coast, the family of the dead child decided that his life (or the life of one of his family) must be taken to avenge their loss. The fact that Lester was no relation of the driver, did not speak the same language or even come from the same country meant nothing to those intent on killing him.

In great distress, the local church leaders rallied round Lester, urging him to escape with his family and leave the area. Lester's reply was heroic. With May's approval, he said, "No! We have come to serve these people and to share the Gospel of Love and Peace." His stand made a great impression on the community. It was the stuff that missionary spirit is made of!

With the protection of Church leaders the situation eventually cooled down and Lester was able to continue his teaching and pastoral vocation having demonstrated the strength and commitment of his faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Jim Cropp

Usaia Sotutu Fijian Missionary in Bougainville

Usaia Sotutu, Methodist missionary, was born on the island of Tavea, Bua province, in 1901. He received technical training at the Methodist industrial school at Davuilevu. In 1921, Sotutu followed a well-established church tradition by offering to go as a missionary to Bougainville, in this instance, to Skotolan. He proved popular and effective in his work. Ordained to the ministry, he administered medicine, used his artisan skills to good effect, gained conversions through defiance of the local spirits and wrote a book about Jesus in the local Petats dialect. Usaia's wife, Makareta - daughter of a Fijian Methodist minister — shared her Fijian methods of gardening, food preparation, weaving and simple cures. She later ran a school on Buka which received high praise from the education inspectors.

When the Japanese invasion, totalling 42,000 soldiers, began in 1942, Sotutu refused to leave his people. While in hiding, he continued to celebrate the church sacraments. He joined the Australian Coastwatchers as a non-combatant. In June 1942, Sotutu went to the south of Bougainville where he made contact with the Fijian battalion when they landed. He became their chaplain, receiving the rank of sergeant. Sotutu is best remembered for his assistance when the Japanese isolated the Fijian battalion, along with two hundred local women and children, well behind the enemy lines and mounted an ambush near the Laruna River north of Torokina. The Battalion commander, GT Upton, asked the Coastwatchers if they knew of a way out. Sotutu replied. There are 99 tracks on Bougainville known to the Japanese. I know the 100th. Follow me!

Awarded the British Empire Medal for wartime services, Sotutu remained with his people in Bougainville after the war until ill health forced him to return to Fiji. His wife, Makareta, became headmistress of a girl's hand-craft school in Suva and wrote a memoir of their years in Melanesia.

Andrew Thornley



Usaia and Makareta Sotutu

Stephen Sukina **Historian and Communicator**

Stephen Sukina is one of the few people on Bougainville Island who has been concerned to record the history of his people and church.

Born in 1922, Sukina was the grandson of the paramount chief Hining, who invited the Methodist Church to the area. In his early years he was schooled in the customs and practices which would fit him to become a chief.

After his grandfather died in 1935, Sukina decided to enter the village school at Maisua. His teacher Jeremiah Moki welcomed him with these words, *My son, are you willing to attend school? This church school is your own school, which your grandfather and father asked to be established here. You must work hard and learn all you can, then you will become an important person in your church here.*

Sukina says, *These remarks encouraged me to be what I am today, and I have never forgotten them.*



Stephen Sukina

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In 1938, against his father's wishes, he went with Nathan Uhoto to Kihili Mission School. His father ordered him to return and Sukina disobeyed because of his desire for education. Soon after this his mother Nerai died, and he returned home to find that the cremation had already been carried out. After a sorrowful few weeks he returned to school until war interrupted his schooling.

Missionaries the Rev. and Mrs AH Voyce and Sister Ada Lee were on leave in New Zealand, and Sukina was given the whole responsibility of caring for their property and the station. The arrival of the Japanese made this impossible though he managed to rescue some of Mrs Voyce's more precious possessions. It was his delight to find the clock still keeping good time when many years later he visited the Voyces after they had retired to New Zealand.

In April 1942 over forty Rataiku young men were ordered to unload the Japanese warship *Hitatimaru*. Sukina was supposed to be among them but he was unwilling to go. An American bomb destroyed the ship, killing all on board. Sukina wrote:

I praise God that I am still living today ... One night while I was sleeping in our little bush house with my brothers and sister, I had a dream of a garden, divided into two by a fence through the middle. One side of the garden was in the rain, the other side had sun shining on it. I and my brothers and sister were on the rainy side looking towards the sunny side of the garden. Then pioneer missionary David Pausu came and stood beside me, pointing out into it and said 'Don't worry or be sad, one day you'll be preaching on that side where the sun is shining.' I praise God that my dream became a reality and I'm doing what I saw in that dream.

At the end of 1943 many people moved to Torokina to the American Army camp. There Sukina worked in the mechanical workshop and later in the food store, using all the skills of his leadership and education.

He was still in Torokina when the missionaries returned after the war.

He returned to Maisua village and gathered the people to rebuild their homes. They also built a small church in the centre of the village.

He returned to help the Rev. Voyce collect army surplus materials for the use of the mission. In 1947 a new mission centre was built at Koau and Sister Ada Lee reopened the Mission School. Sukina returned to continue his education. In 1949 he entered the teacher training class under the Rev. George Carter.

His first pastor/teacher position was to Maisua. As well as these duties he undertook the medical work for the area. He married Mary Kiraa in 1951, beginning a partnership of mutual help, love and encouragement.

To further his pastoral training Sukina went to Banga College in the Solomons for three years. Again he found himself with positions of responsibility.

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Over the next several years he was appointed to positions which enabled the work of the church to grow. He opened schools in new areas, conducted classes in pastoral care with teachers and leaders and negotiated with landowners to release property for the extension of mission work.

In 1959 Sukina went to Kekesu Teachers College for two years training in order to qualify under the new government teaching syllabus for Papua New Guinea. He achieved both the 'A' and 'B' certificates. He began as headmaster at Roreinang Primary School and in 1968 he was one of four chosen to go for advanced teacher training at the Roman Catholic College at Buka.

Subsequently he returned to Maisua as headmaster and held this position until he retired in 1977. During these nine years he brought about many changes, improving the life of the community. Sukina's involvement in leadership did not end with his retirement. He was appointed Catechist of the Rataiku, a position he held for 17 years. His involvement included building the Timothy Kutomai Memorial Church and the Tonu High School.

He and Mary have had seven children who show the same qualities as their wonderful father.

In 1995 there was a service to recognise his official retirement from church duties. At that function he said:

I have served Christ as a faithful servant for more than sixty one years. In 1995 I retired from official church duties but I am still serving him in whatever way I can.

Stephen's wife Mary Kiraa, died on 16 February 2001.

Nancy Carter

David Voeta Pioneer Missionary

I am an orphan. My father died when I was small. I was not alone; there was mother and four of us. My eldest brother was away on a ship, and he did not come back again. We had no house because I was only a child and could not work. We made a house of bush leaves, and went from place to place in the bush ... mother used to cry and so did the three of us. One man wanted to kill us, but his wife persuaded him not to do so. When I was a bigger boy I made a little house. It was twelve feet long, and my mother lived in it. The people called it the 'birds nest' and made fun of it....

This paragraph is extracted from *The Story of a Pioneer Missionary* by the Rev. George Carter. The words are those of a most remarkable man. David Voeta was only twelve years of age when he built the 'birds nest'. Then disaster struck. He had been away for a few days hunting, and on his return found that his mother had died, his brother had returned and taken his sister and his younger brother away with him. David was by himself.

In 1916 Methodist missionaries came to Ranonga Island. The boy who no one loved went to school and developed a desire to learn and responded warmly to the Christian love shown him. He proceeded to the Mission School at Bilua, Vella Lavella Island, and later to the District College at Roviana. On 28 December 1925 he was married to Salome, the daughter of the very man who had wanted to kill him. Sadly she died in childbirth on 7 February 1927.



David Voeta

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Synod met in November 1929 and asked for volunteers to go to Bougainville. This was David's moment. He offered to go and along with some others was sent to the Teop area where the new work had been opened in 1922. David took up his first appointment in the Vaeri area on 1 January 1930. He taught the people how to build houses, weave mats, clean their houses and village area and how to wash themselves. He took daily devotions (Lotu) and worked hard to build a schoolroom and meeting house. He encountered much opposition, but gradually friendships were made, and assistance was given. It was slow going trying to make the village surroundings more hygienic and teach hospitality and friendliness. But this gentle, determined man won their respect and support.

David always had a concern for those not yet touched by the Gospel and he kept reaching out from his village to others in the neighbourhood. It was not easy to show friendship to other villages, especially those who were not on friendly terms, and David came in for much criticism. But he continued to reach out. The Rotokas area, around Mt Baibi, beckoned him.

Tearaka had become the second centre of mission work in the Teop area, and was the base for advancement into the Rotokas and Ita areas. By 1932 they were ready and David was appointed the leader of this forward move. There was antagonism from heathen 'locals', from other Missions, and from local people who were unsure about this enthusiastic 'outsider' who had come to live among them.

Then came the 'Depression Years' and the Mission's resources dwindled. There was retrenchment, withdrawal of European staff and reduced wages for local teachers. David Voeta worked for no wages.

His expansion work brought increasing opposition. There was some competition between the Churches and David was falsely accused of breaking the law. He was jailed for a week, and then released without trial. In February 1936 he was again in jail accused of disturbing the peace. He suffered some maltreatment and was hospitalised. The District Officer visited him, and shortly afterwards he was released.

Ruruvu village became his main centre, using it as a base for moving forward into the hinterland and linking up with the Siwai area. But David's health broke down. The maltreatment he had suffered, in addition to malaria and chest troubles, forced him to give up active ministry. Friends carried him to the coast, then took him by canoe to the Mission Hospital at Teop island, where this 'warrior of the Lord' passed away.

The 'child no one loved' had been caught up by the love of Christ and spent his life proclaiming by his words and his actions that, *The Gospel was the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.* (Romans 1:16)

Today a church building at Ruruvu has on it a plaque, Dedicated to God, as a memorial to David Voeta.

Trevor Shepherd

The Lives of Ordinary Women in the Roviana Area in the Early 1900's as reported by Helena Goldie

In a copy of the *New Zealand Methodist Times* in 1922, Mrs Goldie talks of the life of women as she had found it twenty years before. In the following paragraphs I summarize her observations.

In the ordinary village life all the women of the village, carrying knives and baskets, would start out for their gardens early in the morning, walking single file along the narrow bush track, a solitary man bringing up the rear. To make a new garden the women would fell the giant trees, cut and burn the logs and dig the soil to plant the various foods. Returning to the village, the women carried huge baskets of food on their heads, stacks of firewood on their backs and if there was a baby it would be slung on the hip.

The man would still be bringing up the rear carrying his spear, ready to protect the women if an enemy appeared. On reaching the village the man would have a swim while his wife heated the stones for the native oven and cooked the dinner.

The women had no part in the religious life of the community; they were not allowed to taste the food which had been sacrificed to the gods. They were never cannibals, because all human flesh was sacrificed first on the sacred altars before being eaten. Other restrictions included not being allowed to enter a canoe owned by a man for fear of defiling it, and destroying its good luck in fishing. *It was making history when one of us, a white woman, entered a war canoe for the first time quite recently.*



Young Solomon Island mother and her child.

[Photo – Jorgen Lungberg, Publ. – Lillian Dennis, Guadalcanal]

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Many of the bush tracks were forbidden to the women. They were not allowed to walk anywhere near the shrine of an idol, or on a track used by the men when starting on their headhunting raids, for fear of breaking the tapu.

If a man took ill, a woman would be accused of witchcraft, and she would be forced to reveal where she had hidden something belonging to the man, such as some hair, or some food left from his previous meal. The men would find someone who had been restless the night before, and willing to say he had seen this woman flitting about in the darkness of the night, with a long trail of multi-coloured light following her. A 'witch' was hung by her thumbs to a high tree for two or three days thereby made ready to confess to anything, and often preferring death to this misery.

If a woman's husband died, she had the alternative of hanging herself to the nearest tree, or the indignity of others performing the task for her. No widow was allowed to survive her husband.

Imagine our joy when old Ingava, the late king, was dying, and we heard him tell Polio, his wife, that he wished her to break this dreadful custom and follow the Christian way of living to care for the children. Widows are even allowed to re-marry in a few parts of the Solomons today.

The people lived in constant fear of death especially through evil, or angry spirits, or the curse of someone who hated them. When a death occurred the conch shell would be blown, and the women would gather as fast as they could, and spend several days and nights wailing for the departed. The wailing filled the air for many days without a moment's cessation. As one batch of women became too hoarse to speak, others took their place.

I remember my first experience of this kind of thing. I had been nursing a trader man suffering from pneumonia. He was slightly better, but feeling warm, and hearing the rain, he crept over the body of the guard and went to lie down in the cool water on the wet ground. He died the next day. Imagine the shock I received when I visited him not knowing he was dead, and saw him sitting on a chair with all his war-paint on, and following the usual custom, the head partly severed from the body to prevent the evil spirits entering. The house was crowded with women waiting to wail, and they moved up to make room for me. Suddenly, the leader gave one awful heart-rending shriek, and the others softly chanted an accompaniment. My hair rose, and my spinal column shivered, I gave a hasty look round, and ran as if an evil spirit were after me.

There were very few children, and these were usually adopted by others, taken away from their parents, to grow up caring more for the mother through adoption than for the natural mother.

Girls were sold to the highest bidder and were married at an early age to whoever could gather together sufficient native money. Girls were never allowed to choose husbands for themselves.

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Epidemics and tropical illnesses were prevalent and often affected children. Infanticide was practiced. Older women sometimes encouraged this practice, until the missionaries were able to persuade them otherwise. Childbirth itself was hazardous. It was little wonder women were filled with terror at the thought of motherhood, as many women died at childbirth. Even a chief's wife had to build her own little hut in a special area some distance from the village. The expectant mother had to prepare her own food and firewood. When her time came she had to cope with the fear, lack of knowledge and pain without even the help of her own mother.

Helena Goldie's description of the condition of women in the early days was used to encourage recruits to serve in the Solomons. New Zealand had just taken over the Solomons District as its mission field.

Trained teachers and nurses continued the work that Mrs Goldie had started. In addition to their professional duties they took special care of women and girls, teaching them the basics of health, sewing, childcare and home care. This knowledge spread as the girls returned to their villages. Girls attended school, particularly after Sister Lina Jones began her kindergarten. Class meetings and Bible Study had their part, though women were reluctant to be seen as leaders.

In 1961 the Government began to show its interest in women's concerns and talked of clubs for women. At Munda a decision was made to form a Methodist Women's Fellowship. The local women involved in this decision were Nellie Bitibule, Ivy But, Joyce Kevisi, Dora Zio, Piqe Zinihite, Lisa Pania and Maggie Padakera.

The Fellowship was to be based on Christian values. We formed our own pledge to be said at every meeting, highlighting our aims. Local leaders held the positions of president, secretary and treasurer. To confirm their identity, the women decided to have a uniform and later a flag. People like Maggie travelled to outer islands spreading the idea and progressively MWF took hold in other Circuits.

The men had been very suspicious and discouraging about women becoming so prominent, but they were gradually won over and gave active support.

The Maramas and Sisters encouraged and gave assistance as required, particularly in cutting out clothes for sewing classes and introducing new ways to take devotions. Fun activities like singing and dancing took place alongside sewing and cooking.

By 1965 Robin Bowden, an Australian Volunteer, worked full time as organiser and in 1967 Sister Lesley Bowen became organiser for the whole District. The Methodist Women's Fellowship had become a force within the church community. When the United Church was inaugurated in 1968 MWF spread to other districts and became United Church's Women's Fellowship and now takes its place in Pacific and world forums.

In one hundred years women have moved from being disregarded and victimised to leaders in church and community within Papua, New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

We celebrate those women who had a vision and followed it.

Nancy Carter

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