



## METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - October 2021

In this month's newsletter, we focus on the Solomon Islands, and Sasamugga Hospital.

### **SASAMUGGA HOSPITAL, SOLOMON ISLANDS: visiting doctor's residence**

The P J Twomey Hospital (commonly known as Sasamugga Hospital) is located in Sasamugga village on remote Choiseul Island. Sasamugga Hospital was established in 1905. Our connection from Methodist Church of New Zealand includes deaconesses with nursing qualifications and experience and missionary nursing sisters who served this hospital for many years. Today the staff is all Solomon Islanders.

Over previous years Methodist Mission and Ecumenical has provided funds for a range of projects, including: housing for nurses, outboard motors for the hospital boat to enable staff to move around the area the hospital serves, a computer and printer, an upgrade of the birthing room plus medical equipment, support of the laboratory and pharmacy, and a solar power unit.



*Sasamugga Hospital(above); maternity ward, and solar unit (below)*



In recent years a new house was built to accommodate visiting doctors, particularly from overseas. This was completed, but the Covid pandemic meant that the plan for doctors from Switzerland to be based there has not been able to be achieved so far.

Meanwhile, though the visiting doctors house was completed, it was not furnished. A request was made of MM&E for assistance. This request aligned with an anonymous donor within MCNZ wishing to make a significant donation to work in the Solomon Islands. The MM&E was able to avail of this donation, with the donor's support, to contribute NZD 6,000 that enabled full furnishing to occur.

The completed and furnished house was dedicated on 21 September 2021. It has already been put to use, accommodating three doctors on tour for Covid-19 awareness and vaccination in Choiseul. Following this, two doctors from Honiara are coming in the third week of October for three months on rotating basis.

Photos from the Dedication of the visiting doctor's residence



Hospital staff



Carpenters, electricians and plumbers

**Your assistance is invited:**

Sasamugga Hospital will be utilising their boat for a series of satellite clinic visits during and after the Covid vaccination programme.

*"We do need fuel"*

A donation of \$100 will fund a trip of the boat.

To make a donation, please deposit to the Connexion's MM&E account: **02-0800-0766004-03** and note **"MME fuel"** as a reference. To advise payment and arrange a receipt, send an email to [mm-e@methodist.org.nz](mailto:mm-e@methodist.org.nz)



**COVID-19 AND THE SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Solomon Islands is currently Covid free but it has previously recorded 20 cases of Covid-19 in management isolation and quarantine. In recent months several crew members aboard foreign cargo vessels have tested positive while in Solomon Islands waters but they have not been allowed to disembark. So far there have been no active cases of Covid-19 in the community.

Vaccine roll outs are now underway in all 10 provinces in the country.

In recent correspondence with Rev Caleb Kotali, Sassamugga Hospital, he commented, "In Choiseul the teams are working very hard visiting every small and big villages. I hope at the end of the year most people will be fully vaccinated.

"Vaccination in Solomon Islands is very slow but improving. Currently about ninety-two thousand people received 1<sup>st</sup> - and second dose only 30% [of vaccinations]; but I think at the end of this December will increase to 70%. Our goal is to reach 90%." Currently so far only 6.4 percent of the eligible population are fully vaccinated against the virus.

To a question of vaccine-hesitancy, he shared, "Not much resistance here. There are few people are not interested to be vaccinated; they are scared."



The Solomon's Island Government are using two vaccines, AstraZeneca (including donations of 28,800 doses from New Zealand and 113,000 doses from Australian governments) and Sinopharm from the Chinese Government. Recently it announced it would also soon be offering the Pfizer vaccine. Solomon Islands is a recipient of the international initiative COVAX (which is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and the World Health Organization (WHO), alongside key delivery partner UNICEF). The aim of COVAX is to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

### **UNITING CHURCH IN SOLOMON ISLANDS – statement on Covid-19 and vaccination**



**"The United Church in Solomon Islands holds firmly to the truth that grounded faith and sound medical-scientific advice are not enemies!"**

The United Church in Solomon Islands (UCSI) recently released the below statement on COVID-19 vaccinations. We are encouraged by the faithfulness and wisdom shown by the UCSI leadership to guide people past fear and misinformation.

*The United Church in Solomon Islands has always taken a very positive and supportive stance of the view, policy and strategic actions of the present government regarding COVID19. When COVID19 became a global pandemic, and from the time the government declared a State of Emergency, the UCSI has been proactive and active in its advocacy and educational awareness efforts, utilising the wide reach of its presence and network. While church members were asked to pray fervently for God's protection, they were also encouraged to listen to and obey instructions from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. The UCSI recognises the reality that COVID19 has crossed into our borders, and affirms the fact that all Solomon Islanders and expatriates who reside/work in our country are vulnerable.*

*The United Church in Solomon Islands holds firmly to the truth that grounded faith and sound medical-scientific advice are not enemies! They are companions on the journey of and toward wellness and wholeness. The church believes that wisdom and knowledge are from God, including medical-scientific discoveries and breakthroughs. In this light research into, discoveries and*

*development of COVID19 vaccines are manifestations of such knowledge and wisdom. They are answers to the prayers of all God's people. Life is God's gift, and all that affirms, saves, protects, nurtures and advances this one life is within God's vision for life to thrive on Earth. Contrary to the many negatives that people say, vaccines – including COVID19 vaccines – are life forces within the vastness and depth of God's immeasurable loving kindness and generosity, which science continues to tap and harness for the wellness and furtherance of human life.*

*Faith is vital to Christian life and living. Yet, without appropriate action, faith means nothing – it is dead! COVID19 is more a medical infliction than a crisis of faith! COVID19 is not about choosing between faith or taking the shot! It is about both faith and taking the vaccine shot! Taking the vaccine shot validates and actualises faith during these COVID19 times. Leaders of the UCSI who serve at the church headquarters have all been fully vaccinated. Many other church leaders and members have also received their two vaccine shots.*

*“Love your neighbour as you love yourself” is a Christian imperative! In COVID19 times, “your neighbour” includes infants and children and youths who are under 18 years old and, therefore, not eligible for the vaccine shot! Taking the vaccine shot is a duty of love for neighbour! “Do no harm. Do the right thing. Do the good thing.” Obviously, these are ethical wisdom from our cultural and traditional moorings. These are also ethical principles from our Christian heritage. Taking the vaccine shot is the best and wisest ethical choice anyone can make during COVID19 times. Emmanuel means “God with us”. This “God with us” is best told and seen when we demonstrate God's protective, saving and healing presence to our families and communities by doing the right and good thing that does no harm to them – that is, by getting the COVID19 vaccine today!*

**“Taking the vaccine shot is a duty of love for neighbour”**

## **PACIFIC STATEMENT ON WELLBEING**



The Pacific Theological College Covid-19 recently provided to the Pacific Council of Churches a wellbeing statement that offers support for a broader health approach and an argument to rethink the current health narrative from a biblical, theological, and Pasifika cultural perspective.

The resource is offered to assist Pasifika and worldwide churches, partners, faith-based organisations, and grassroots communities. To read this document, visit <https://ptc.ac.fj/ptc-covid-19-wellbeing-statement/>

**“Today more than ever, it is crucial for Pasifika communities to revisit what we mean by health. We need a holistic narrative that encompasses the numerous other strands of life and wellbeing that could assist Pasifika communities endure the pandemic crisis.”**

### **MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD**

**Methodist Church of New Zealand**

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