

MALAITA MISSIONS TRIP, 2019.

In 2013 the Diocese of Nelson set up a partner relationship with the Diocese of Malaita led by Bishop Sam Sahu. Much has happened over the past 6 years, and this relationship has continued in part, through the Rev Jonathan and Tess Hicks and their family, who now live at the Airahu training center, where Jonathan teaches theology at the Trinity School of Theology and Ministry (TSTM) in partnership with NZCMS.

The Nelson Diocesan Missions Council was planning a missions trip to Malaita in 2019, but with the episcopal election happening it was decided to postpone until 2020. Instead, Rev Dr Graham O'Brien and The Very Reverend Mike Hawke went over to give some talks at the Trinity School of Theology and Ministry for clergy, students and the public, as well as to discuss the possibilities for a team of 16 going to Malaita in 2020.



Graham and Mike departed from Nelson on Saturday June 22 and arrived in Auki on Sunday June 23 (overnight Brisbane). On the first Monday they met with the Diocesan staff team for general introductions and discussion, and then were shown around by Canon Reuben (ex-Premier of Malaita), especially to the Cathedral in the village of Fiu (via the family watermelon farm).

Tuesday-Thursday: The focus of these days was to give a series of talks at the Trinity School of Theology (TSTM) and Ministry located at the Airahu Training Center, 45 min drive North from Auki: The talks were a mix of theology and ministry praxis. There were approximately 60 attending each day, with a mix of students and staff from TSTM, clergy, Diocesan staff, Melanesian brothers and Anglican Sisters. There was really good engagement in the talks and lots of singing.

- Graham: (i) The uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus Christ (ii) The relationship between Gospel, Bible and Church, and (iii) Science and Theology.
- Mike: (i) Evangelism & Discipleship through the local church (especially through Preaching & Teaching), (ii) Evangelism & Discipleship through the local church - through Cell Groups, and (iii) Anglican Discipleship among Young People (Confirmation).





On the Tuesday night they had dinner with the Hicks' family. It was great to visit their house which the Nelson Diocese contributed towards. They are also building other staff houses and a new teaching space specifically for TSTM. On Thursday night there was a farewell community dinner.

Friday, was a time of further discussions with Bp Sam and the Diocesan staff team on the diocesan partnership and the missions trip in 2020. Five key areas were identified in which Nelson can partnership with Malaita, and it was agreed to aim for August 2020 as the timing of the 10 day trip for a team of 16 from Nelson to go to Malaita:



1. **Theological Education:** Through guest lecturing and ministry training support at the Trinity School of Theology and Ministry. Longer term the possibility of a student exchange program and staff exchange program with BTC.
2. **Youth and Children's Ministry:** especially through music, choir, and worship leading and helping to develop programmes.
3. **Hospital and Prison Ministry:** Support the work and ministry of the Hospital and Prison chaplain.
4. **Discipleship:** Helping to develop cell group leadership, practical discipleship and cell group ministry skills, and lay ministry training and support.
- **Counseling:** The Mothers Union have established a new Counseling Center and need support to train people in practical psycho-social support and counseling skills.

Longer-term, as a Diocese we have also been asked to think about how best we can partner with the Diocese of Malaita going forward in two major projects: 1. A hospital project at Fauabu - working together with Revd Peter Rickman and his team in Hamilton; 2. The School of Theology and Ministry (TSTM) – which as Bp Sam says is vital for a growing and living faith in Melanesia based on good biblical theology.



There are also other possibilities:

- There could be a “clergy-exchange” as a way of ministry experience for both Diocese.
- Deacon Jack is the new Diocesan Children's worker, who would benefit from some time in Nelson to look at resources. He also runs a 500 strong children's choir and would benefit from any experience in this ministry.
- The possibility of some students attending Bishopdale Theological College.
- The possibility of the two Bishops signing a “formal” MOU of partnership.

On Saturday, Graham and Mike flew to Honiara (Saturday to Tuesday), and visited a women's refuge center run by the Melanesian sisters. This facility also has sponsorship from the NZ government. For 90 minutes they talked to, sang with, and played frisbee with a group of women and girls who live at the refuge – this was a joyous time. On Sunday Mike preached at St Barnabas Cathedral, Honiara. The main service began at 8am and we finished at 12pm. There were 500-600 attending along with a school group from Canberra. The sermon was accompanied by singing from Graham at the beginning, middle, and end of the sermon. The rest of the day was spent with Geoff and Carol Falloon, parishioners from the All Saints parish, Nelson who are VSA workers, running the accounting system for "Pacific Kokonut" (on Monday we got shown around the factory which was amazing as they seek to add value to coconut products and can empower village enterprise).

On Monday they visited Bishop Paterson College in Kohimarama, a 90 min drive from Honiara and also the location of the Melanesian Brothers. It was good to visit, but unfortunately it was mid-term break so there were no students and very little staff. The Vice Principal appreciated our visit and would be keen for any assistance.

Overall this was a very positive trip to continue building our relationship with Malaita.

Some practical learnings from trip:

- Based on the cost of this trip (not including personal spending e.g. water and incidentals) we would budget \$4,000NZ pp for the mission trip in 2020.
- Having the use of a guitar or two was essential. We managed to find one shop in Auki that sold guitars (\$130NZ each), which was much cheaper than bringing them from NZ (would have to be checked in as extra luggage). These were able to be left as a gift to TSTM and the Cathedral in Honiara (along with nylon strings)
- Alongside this, having a "songbook" was very useful as singing is a big part of the culture.
- Travel takes a long time as the roads are not maintained, and people move slow due to the heat.
- Keep the team to 16 as this is the size of the mini-vans (a tip from the Canberra School).
- Where possible we will put 2 per room to reduce cost.
- Accommodation and food is expensive (\$100NZ per night for basic accommodation; restaurants approx. \$20-30NZ for mains).
- Each person to come with 2 simple Bible studies prepared.
- There is very little internet – the only contact would be via text and calls.