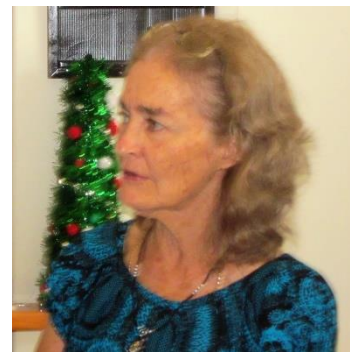


Newsletter from Valerie Archer  
Kapuna, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea

20<sup>th</sup> July 2020



Hello there Church Family,

Jeryl sent me a gentle reminder last week, that I have not been communicating very well lately, and it is true. So I tried to think of why, and of all the excuses that have kept me busy. Praise the Lord, I have not been unwell. My health is good apart from a few teeth problems...

So here is a rundown of some of the things that keep me busy outside of my normal hospital work. As you will have guessed, normal day to day hospital work is organised and the time is manageable; it is all the other things that tend to make my day busy.

Hopefully this will bring you up to date and cover up for some of the weeks I haven't written. I guess there have been a number of bigger issues going on this year that have kept me a bit busier than normal.

## 1. COVID 19

I don't think anyone out there needs to be told what this is, and I think most of you have been impacted by this more than we have. PNG's grand count of Covid cases is now up to 15 (as at 19<sup>th</sup> July, and increasing faster) the latest 4 all being workers at the central laboratory of Port Moresby General Hospital, It is certainly an infectious virus as two of the four workers only work in the laboratory, and not with Covid samples.

The main problem I personally have had to face with Covid are the endless meetings. These type of meetings are the bane of my life – they take hours to attend and usually don't achieve anything. This is because there is no money with which to do anything and no tests with which to get any answers and no way to send the tests to a laboratory even if we had them, and now no laboratory as it has probably been shut down due to the Covid outbreak within it. However the hospital has to have “Covid plans” in place and the staff well trained and on the alert. And the country, while not in a state of emergency, has to remain “alert,” which translates to “services continue to not run”.

For us this means that all the overseas doctors who were supposed to visit, cannot because the visa office is not open, or the labour office is not open or the medical registration office is not open or the office where you pay your money for medical registration is not open... It was also sad that our expected visit from the YWAMPNG didn't happen... that is why my teeth didn't get fixed!

The perks that Oil Companies bring with them have all gone too, because all the workers have gone home to their home countries and cannot return. So no oil is running which means no revenue for the Government, so Government cannot do anything.

Total and Oil Search, both large international Oil companies working in Gulf Province, are still helping us with shipping and some fuel, even though they are both officially closed. So that is a wonderful good thing that you can Praise the Lord for.

## 2. The second busy thing also involves money and politics.

Our hospital is part of a network of “Faith based” hospitals under Christian Health Services. CHS are contracted to the Government to provide health services in rural areas, but this year the contractors have not been paid since March. So all the Christian run health services are

wondering what to do. As from this pay fortnight, there is no Government money to pay workers, so some of the hospitals and a majority of small clinics in the rural areas are closing down. We at Gulf Christian Services (GCS) have enough money of our own, mostly from the hospital canteen, to pay our staff half wages for a few fortnights, so we are OK for now. We were directed to cut our hospital services to protest to the Government. But we all felt we couldn't in good conscience do that.

Our Bible reading that week was: Proverbs 3:27:

**Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. Never tell your neighbours to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now. Don't plan anything that will hurt your neighbours; they live beside you, trusting you.**

So instead we held a half hour stop work meeting and staged a protest (which is on the Kapuna Facebook page if you are interested to see some photos). So we will see what will happen with this. Just a note – if you do check out our Facebook page, then you are welcome to write supportive messages on it but please don't write negative things about the Government on it. It doesn't do anyone any good. Thanks.

### **3. Doctors**

One of the Kikori doctors had bereavement in their family and went back to NZ for three weeks. So I have been shifting around a bit to cover up. I spent quite a bit of time in Kikori, in fact, nearly all of May.

### **4. The Building Project**

The hospital rebuild under the Australian government incentive fund project, is going on nicely. We are now about half way through. We are occupying the first 3 wards to be finished and the next 3 are coming on. One is nearly finished, one has the floor on and the other one is still having its posts cemented in.

The new wards are so nice to work in, light, airy, and with nice smooth vinyl floors. We are looking forward now to the project being finished. We are also looking forward to the last concrete mixer being removed from under our windows and being able to hear ourselves think again.

The building project also takes lots of time – "Please come and look at these plans for a last time. Do you want sliding windows, louvres or shutters? And would it be better to move them a little to the right to be further from the door or a bit to the left and put the door here instead? Do you want the doors to swing in or out? How high should the ceiling be? What cladding do you want on the walls of the operating theatre? Our supplier has run out of blue vinyl, and because of Covid they can't import any more: "Are you happy with the rest of the hospital in beige?"

### **5. The Practical Nurse Training Course -- Community Health Workers**

This is a 6 month postgraduate course for the CHW nurses. I run this every year. Some of the WBCC money that has come my way in the past has gone to this program especially to support the end of course visit to the coast and the end of year retreat that I organise for the graduates.

Teaching an hour a day keeps me busy and of course the end of any course is always a busy with assessments, marks to allocate, references to write, a graduation to plan, etc.

## 6. Church Activities

When I returned from Kikori I found I was scheduled to take the ladies church service. At Kapuna we have an interdenominational/non-denominational church service for our staff who are from all different denominations. We do not have a “pastor” as such, though we do have a couple of evangelists on the staff who we call “Pastor”.

The church is governed by “Church Leaders” and they make a roster of whoever are considered suitable to take the services each Sunday – sometimes individuals, but more often groups. So it might be the Sunday School leading the service, or the Men's Group, Ladies' Group, Hospital Staff or the Carpenters or the Office Workers. Sometimes we break up into groups – Ladies, Men and Young people, or Marrieds and Singles.

The week I was taking it the church was broken up into Singles, Married Men and Married Ladies. The singles were talking about “Choosing your partner”, the married men were talking about Pornography, and so I chose the topic, “If men have a problem with Pornography, What do women have a problem with?” Sex is a very Taboo subject and difficult for the ladies to talk about, so it was very good to have an opportunity to bring it into the open. We broke into 3 groups for discussion, young mothers, women with older or grown children and overseas ladies whose culture is very different to PNG.

We had some very good discussion. One of the interesting conclusions was – If a Christian wife's non-Christian husband takes a second wife, the Christian wife should not show jealousy when the husband sleeps with his second wife, and should not beat the second wife.

Thank you very much for your continual prayers and support. I very much appreciate it and often think of you if I am in a difficult place... I think, “Welcome Bay prayer groups are praying for me, so I can leave this in God's hands and know that I will survive.”

Love you all very much,

*Valerie*

