The Anglican Church of Melanesia

The Melanesian Mission

DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD

"Pray For Us And Tell Our Stories"

A Six Session Bible Study Course on the Anglican Church of Melanesia

By Rev'd Rich Clarkson



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Introduction

Rev'd Rich Clarkson



In the summer of 2024 I was asked by the Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave, if I would visit the Anglican Church of Melanesia on behalf of Lichfield Diocese, where I am a parish priest. My first thought, I must confess, was "where on earth is Melanesia?!".

Over the next year or so I began to learn more about Melanesia, including where on earth it is (see the following page). In September 2025, with the support of Melanesian Mission UK I spent two weeks there, meeting with individuals and communities and getting a glimpse into the life of the Church in this distant part of the world.

I also went as someone with a keen interest in the environment, to see first hand the impacts of Climate Change in the Pacific, and the work that the Anglican Church is doing in response to that great challenge.

Towards the end of my time there I had the honour of meeting with Archbishop Leonard Dawea, the Archbishop of Melanesia, and after a wide ranging and thought provoking conversation I asked him what message he'd like me to take back home with me. **"Pray for us, and tell our stories"** was his response.

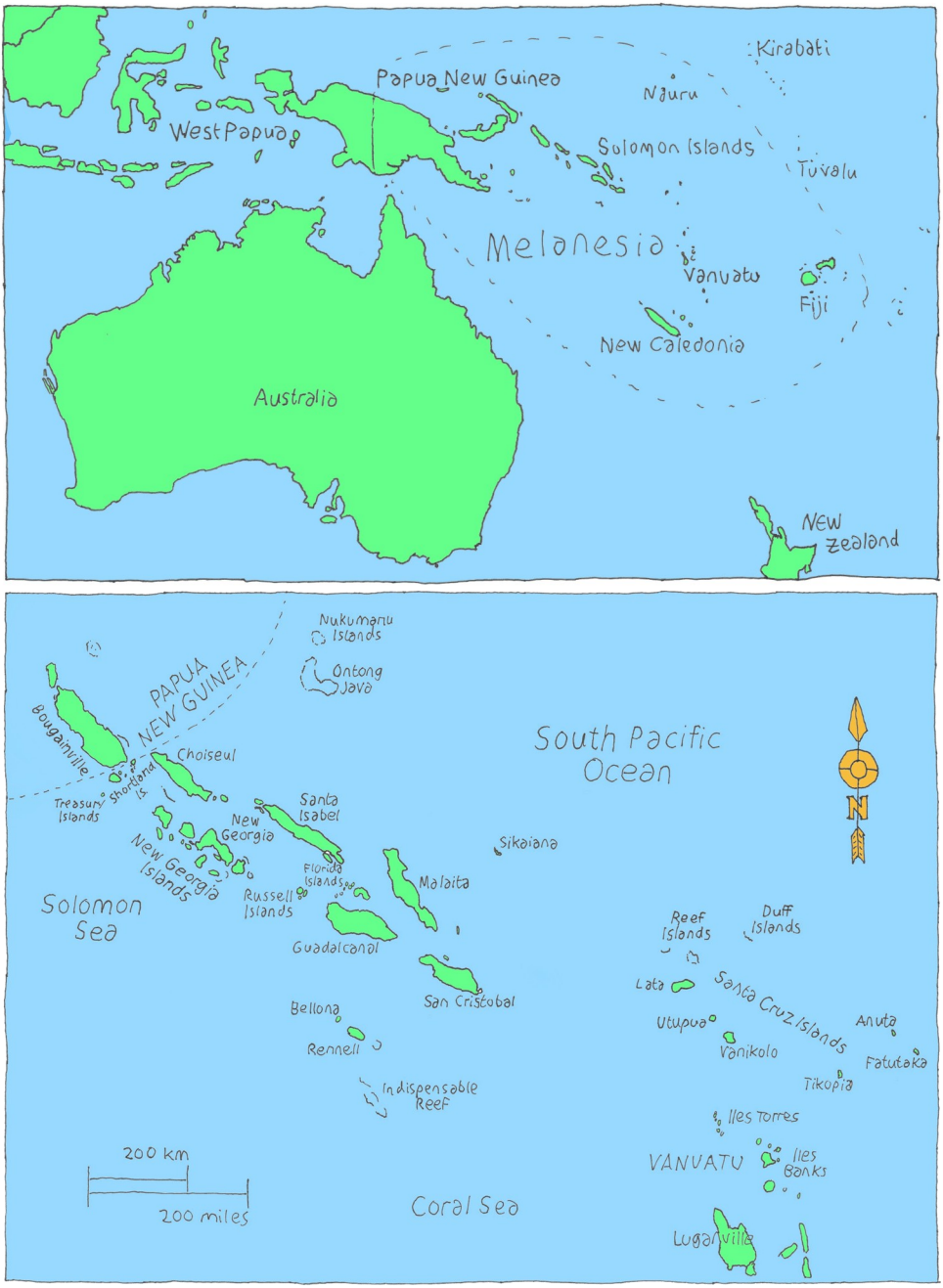
That is what this Bible Study is intended to do. As you journey through the six sessions here, I hope you will catch a glimpse of the history and life of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, as well as the reality of the impact of Climate Change in the region, and be able to pray for our sisters and brothers there in an informed way.

I hope that these sessions are well researched and true to the conversations I had with the people there, but this is, of course, merely a tiny fragment of the long, deep, and rich reality of the life of the Church and people in these beautiful islands. If you would like to know more there are some resources at the end of the booklet, and an excellent starting point is the website of the Melanesian Mission UK:

www.mmuk.net

I hope you find this an enjoyable and helpful series of studies.
Rev'd Rich Clarkson, Rector of Kinver & Enville *(Easter 2026)*

Where is the Anglican Church of Melanesia?



There are ten Dioceses: Banks & Torres; Central Melanesia; Central Solomons; Guadalcanal; Hanuato'o; Malaita; Southern Malaita and Sikaiana; Temotu; Vanuatu and New Caledonia; Ysabel.

Session One: Beginnings
Bishop Selwyn and Bishop Patteson

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round One

1) How many islands are covered by the Anglican Church of Melanesia?

A) around 150 B) around 600 C) over 1,000

2) How long ago did humans first settle in Solomon Islands?

A) 30,000 years B) 12,000 years C) 1500 years

3) What is the combined population of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia?

A) 2.5 million B) 1.4 million C) 800,000

Answers on p.42

Discussion

- How much do you know about Melanesia as you start this course?
- As a group share some of your experiences of Churches in different places and cultures. What have you learned from these experiences?

Story

The Melanesian story begins around 30,000 years ago, when the first human settlers came down from Papua New Guinea. Further waves of migrants arrived over the following millenia, notably the Lapita people from Australia around 3,000 years ago, who developed trade networks between the islands. This long and rich history has given rise to deep and distinctive cultures and languages, which can vary considerably from island to island.



The first Europeans to visit the region were Spanish explorers in the 16th Century but it is in the 19th Century, with the rise of evangelical mission agencies, that our story begins. In October 1841, an energetic 32 year old priest named George Augustus Selwyn was consecrated as Bishop of Auckland in the newly formed Anglican church of New Zealand, where he arrived in May of 1842.

Because of a clerical error in his appointment letters, Selwyn's ministry accidentally covered not only the islands of New Zealand, but also the many dispersed islands of Melanesia. Although he knew it was an error, Selwyn took this Pacific Island mission seriously, visiting on ten different occasions which was no small feat in those days.

- **Bishop Selwyn only travelled to Melanesia because of a clerical error, yet his ministry there was fruitful. Have you ever had an experience of an error leading to great blessing?**

Selwyn established the foundations for the Anglican church in the region but, unlike many of his contemporaries, Selwyn's vision was of a church that reflected local languages and cultures rather than seeing them as 'primitive'. He wrote to a clergy friend at the time, *"to go among them as an equal and a brother is far more profitable than to risk that subtle kind of self-righteousness, which creeps into the mission work, akin to the thanking God that we are not as other men are."*



In 1861 Selwyn appointed John Coleridge Patteson as the first Missionary Bishop of Melanesia, and the two men set about building a church with the vision that it would one day be led by the people of the islands.

They set up schools and a theological college, where they trained up young men and returned them to serve their own people in God's name. Bishop Patteson was a talented linguist, and learned 23 of the Melanesian languages as he travelled around on the Melanesian Mission ship, the Southern Cross.

- **The vision of Selwyn and Patteson was of a Melanesian church led by Melanesian people. What benefits would this approach bring to the people of the islands? Have you seen this approach taken in your community or elsewhere? How did it work?**

Around this time the practice of 'blackbirding' was rife, where trading vessels would, by force or deception, take men and boys from the islands to work on plantations. In September 1871 Bishop Patteson landed on the tiny island of Nukapu where, not long before, five men had been taken in this manner. Quite what happened next is disputed, but the outcome was that Bishop Patteson and two of his crew were killed.

By the time of Patteson's death, Bishop Selwyn had returned to England where he had been consecrated as Bishop of Lichfield in 1868. However the vision of Selwyn and Patteson for a Melanesian church led by Melanesian people continued to develop over the coming century.



The first Melanesian to be ordained as a priest was George Sarawia, from Mota, who was ordained in 1873. In 1963 Leonard Alufurai *(right)* and Dudley Tuti were consecrated as the first Melanesian Bishops, and in 1975 the vision was complete as the first Melanesian Archbishop of Melanesia, Bishop Norman Palmer, was consecrated at St Barnabas' Cathedral in Honiara.

- **Selwyn and Patteson's vision didn't become a reality until many years after their deaths. Can you think of any other examples of people who set the foundations for something that would not come into being until they were no longer there to see it?**
- **One of the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23) is patience, but it can be hard to hold on to a vision when it takes a long time to come to fruition. How easy do you find it to be patient when you have an idea of how something should be?**

Bible Study: Acts 14.21-28

21After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news
to Derbe and had made many disciples, they returned to
Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch.

22There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and
encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, “It is
through many persecutions that we must enter the
kingdom of God.”

23And after they had appointed elders for them in each
church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to
the Lord in whom they had come to believe. 24Then they
passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

25When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went
down to Attalia. 26From there they sailed back to Antioch,
where they had been commended to the grace of God
for the work that they had completed.

7When they arrived, they called the church together and
related all that God had done with them and how he had
opened a door of faith for the gentiles. 28And they stayed
there with the disciples for some time.

Background notes: Following Peter’s vision in Acts 10, the early Christians are becoming more confident in spreading the Good News of Jesus into Gentile (non-Jewish) communities. In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the leaders of the church in Syrian Antioch to spread the Good News. After being driven out of the predominantly Jewish areas of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, they reach the Gentile region of Lystra and Derbe. Here they encourage the Christians and appoint local leaders before heading back home.

- **Read through the passage from Acts 14. What do you see Paul and Barnabas doing in this passage? How do they spread the Good News and strengthen the Church?**
- **What parallels can you see between the ministries of Paul and Barnabas in the Mediterranean, and Bishops Selwyn and Patteson in the Pacific? What differences are there?**
- **How can you learn from their example to help with sharing the Good News in your own community? What challenges do you face?**

ENCOUNTER

There is a light breeze flowing through the balcony where I am sat, providing a welcome relief from the unrelenting heat of the day. The Kauri trees rustle as Patrick comes to join me. He is a Novice here, training for religious life, and is full of theological questions with a quick and thoughtful mind.

His face lights up as he tells me about Nukapu, the small coral island in Temotu Province where he is from. It has about 100 inhabitants and is like a big family. It's the island where Bishop Patteson was killed, but even though that happened over 150 years ago he is at pains to make sure I don't judge his people for that. "Don't judge us by the worst thing we have done", he says. The shame of that September day lingers even now.

"The soil on Nukapu is very fertile, and food grows especially well so it is a blessed place", he tells me. Patrick's grandfather studied in London and then came back to start the school on the island so Patrick's English is very good. His grandfather died last year, and children from the island now have to travel 25km by canoe to the neighbouring island of Pileni to go to school.

There has been a small community on Nukapu for most of the last 3,000 years, but as the sea levels rise the wells and soil are becoming contaminated with salt water, they worry that they will not have long left. "What will happen to our stories then?"



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- ✠ Pray for the Anglican Church of Melanesia, the ACoM General Secretary, and all the staff at the Provincial Headquarters in Honiara.
- ✠ Pray for the Archbishop of Melanesia and his Assistant Bishop and staff in the Diocese of Central Melanesia
- ✠ The Bishop and staff of the Diocese of Central Solomons at the headquarters in Tulagi. Also the Diocese of Guadalcanal and their Bishop. Pray for the completion of their long awaited Diocesan offices.
- ✠ Lift up the New Zealand Trust Board and its directors, as they continue to support the mission and ministry of the church in Melanesia.
- ✠ The ACoM shipyard at Taroaniara and for all who travel the seas for work and ministry.

Collect Prayer for Bishop Selwyn

Almighty Father, through your inspiration,
Bishop George Augustus Selwyn
planted the Church in the Southern Isles:
Keep us steadily growing in true religion, sound learning,
and useful industry, and in lives of justice and compassion;
through the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls,
Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/films** *and watch the film titled "The Melanesian Mission UK Introduction"*

Session Two: Faithfulness
Ini Kopuria & the Melanesian Brotherhood

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round Two

1) What proportion of the population of Solomon Islands describe themselves as Christian?

A) 46.2 B) 84.3 C) 93.6%

2) Who is the Monarch of Solomon Islands?

A) There is no Monarch B) Nelson II C) Charles III

3) How many active volcanoes are there in Melanesia?

A) 21 B) 143 C) 2,238

Answers on p.42

Discussion

- How many different religious orders can you name? *(e.g. Franciscans etc.)*
- What experience, if any, do you have with religious orders? What has that experience been like? Positive? Negative?
- If you were to suddenly find yourself in a religious order what would you enjoy? What would be difficult?

Story



Ini Kopuria was born in around 1900 in Maravovo on the island of Guadalcanal. He attended Anglican schools in Pamua on San Christobal and then on Norfolk Island. He was an intelligent young man and his priest, John Steward, hoped that when he returned to Guadalcanal he would become a teacher. However Kopuria's love for adventure led him to join the Solomon Islands Police Force instead. This job took him all over the island and he got to know people from many different communities.

During a spell in hospital, Kopuria had a vision of Jesus and began to question whether he was really doing what God was calling him to do. When he had recovered he went back to Steward, who was now a Bishop, and proposed the idea of setting up a distinctively Melanesian religious order. Together they worked out what it would look like and in 1925 Brother Ini made his vows before Bishop Steward at Tabalia as the first member of the Melanesian Brotherhood, or Tasiu as they are known in the Mota language.

- **Have you ever had times when, like Ini Kopuria, you have felt that you either are, or are not, doing what God wants you to do with your life? How did you respond?**

The Melanesian Brotherhood celebrated its centenary in 2025, and is still based at Tabalia, which Brother Ini gifted to the Brotherhood at its founding. The Melanesian Brotherhood is evangelistic in its nature, and after taking their vows Brothers are sent to 'households' in communities all across Melanesia, as well as in in the Phillipines and Australia. The 'Tasiu', in their distinctive black robes with a white sash and oval medallion *(see Head Brother, Junior Ini, left)* are well loved and respected across Melanesia.



Brother Ini's vision was to build up a missionary community. *"I have visited all the villages as a police sergeant, and they all know me",* he said, *"why not go to them now as a missionary?"*. This approach is still key to the DNA of the Brotherhood today, as they go in simplicity and humility to their own people.

In 1967 a young woman named Nesta Tiboe also had a vision of Jesus. After much prayer and discussion, in 1980 Tiboe and three other women took their vows as the first members of the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia.



The Melanesian Brotherhood and the Sisters of Melanesia follow the same pattern. Novices train for three years, the Brothers at Tabalia and the Sisters at Verana'aso *(right).* Unlike most religious orders who make a lifelong profession, after their novitiate they make their vows for an initial three years, then they may choose to renew them or can be released to do other work.

- **Ini Kopuria said "They all know me, why not go to them now as a missionary?" What difference might this approach make to how the Brothers are received in different islands and communities?**

Because of their rootedness in islands and communities across Melanesia, the Brotherhood have often found themselves taking a very active role in peace-making. When they go out on mission, they go in groups of Brothers from different islands as a visible sign of Jesus's command to love your neighbour.

This peace-making role was especially seen during the ethnic conflict between the Malaita Eagle Force and the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army in the early years of the 21st century. During this conflict the Brotherhood played a key role in disarmament and peacekeeping as they were seen to be outside of the politics of the situation.



However in April 2003 Brother Nathanial Sado set out to try and reason with the leader of the GRA, Harold Keke, a childhood friend of Sado. When he didn't return another six brothers set out to find him, led by Brother Robin Lindsay. All seven were killed, and are commemorated now as the Seven Martyrs of Melanesia. This time and the role of the Brotherhood is movingly chronicled in *'In Search Of The Lost'*, by Rev'd Richard Carter, who is himself a former Brother.

- **The Seven Martyrs gave their lives to try and bring peace in Jesus's name to their troubled nation, and in doing so inspired others to continue that work. Are there people, from your life or from history, who inspire you in your faith?**

Bible Study: Luke 10.1-9

[1]The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on
ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he
himself intended to go. [2]He said to them, "The harvest is
plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord
of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

[3]Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the
midst of wolves. [4]Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and
greet no one on the road. [5]Whatever house you enter, first
say, 'Peace to this house!' [6]And if a person of peace is there,
your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return
to you.

[7]Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever
they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not
move about from house to house. [8]Whenever you enter a
town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before
you; [9]cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The
kingdom of God has come near to you.'

[17]The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your
name even the demons submit to us!"

Background notes: Jesus has been travelling around with a group of followers for a couple of years by this point. In the previous chapter Luke tells us how Jesus sent the twelve Disciples out to carry on his ministry. After they return with joy, Jesus then commissions a larger group of his followers to do the same.

- **Read through the passage together. How do you think the Disciples felt when Jesus sent them off without him, to do the same things they'd seen him doing? How did Jesus equip them for this?**
- **Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you have been following or learning from someone else, but suddenly you have been given that responsibility yourself? How did you find it? What did you learn about yourself?**
- **The Melanesian Brothers and Sisters are sent to places which they personally may never have been before but where, as members of their order, the people know them. How might this help them to share the stories and love of Jesus with those communities?**

Encounter



The path that leads to the chapel in Tabalia is made of coral, and the brothers slip off their usual brown flip flops to make their way in to worship. Their feet are hardened to the uneven surface, but mine are not and I try to maintain my composure as I head to Morning Prayer. On one occasion I make the mistake of going to the chapel to pray around midday, when the coral is not only sharp but also hot! Later in my stay one of the brothers confides in me that they were enjoying watching me dance my way across the path "but remember" he tells me, "the road to Heaven is not easy."

It's an apt comparison, because worshipping there in the chapel is as close to Heaven as I can remember being in a long while. The sides are open and a gentle breeze flows through, bringing with it the beat of a log drum and the calls of brightly coloured birds I do not recognise. Geckos scamper across the walls, searching for their breakfast as I kneel on a mat woven from banana leaves.

The brothers enter the pews in silence, occasionally shuffling forward to fill spaces nearer the front—I've never managed to get my congregations to do that. At a signal that is unseen by me but clearly understood by the community, everyone shifts into a prayerful posture and the singing begins. It is the most enthusiastic, joyful, melodious singing I have ever encountered. They sing the Magnificat to a tune I know but somehow it is like they aren't just singing it they are embodying it and I am immediately caught up in the worship. The road to Heaven may be hard, but my word it is worth it.



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- ✠ Give thanks for the Melanesian Brotherhood in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, the Philippines, and Australia.
- ✠ Remember the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia, and their outreach to women across the islands. Hold in prayer their Head Sister and Assistant Head Sister, and give thanks for the prayerful support of Associates in Melanesia, Australia, and the UK.
- ✠ Hold the Diocese of Banks and Torres in prayer, along with their Bishop and clergy serving in this remote region from their base in Sola.
- ✠ Give thanks for ACoM's Communications department and the church radio station.

Collect Prayer for Ini Kopuria

God of all tribes, islands and nations,
you called your servant, Ini Kopuria,
to take the light of Christ to those who lived in darkness:
inspire our hearts with the same love of you,
so that we may become faithful messengers of your gospel,
and, in word and action,
share the good news of salvation with all people;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/films** *and watch the films titled "The Community of the Sisters of Melanesia" and "Role of the Melanesian Brotherhood"*

Session Three: Empowerment
Emily Sprott and the Mothers' Union

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round Three

1) When did Mary Sumner begin the first Mothers Union group at Old Alresford in Hampshire?

A) 1843 B) 1876 C) 1907

2) How many Mothers Union members are there in Melanesia?

A) 900 B) 5,500 C) 16,000

3) In what year did Solomon Islands gain full independence from the British Empire?

A) 1949 B) 1967 C) 1978

Answers on p.42

Discussion

- What are the biggest challenges facing women in your community? Where do these stem from?
- What experience, if any, do you have of the Mothers' Union?

Story

Emily Sprott was born in Wigan in 1877, one of 22 children of a local confectioner, Joseph France. As a child she was actively involved in Wigan Parish Church, and in her early 20s she trained in London for missionary work. She married Rev'd Rudolph Sprott and in around 1909 they joined the Melanesian Mission. They spent many years in Ysabel Province where, as her husband's health declined, Emily took on much of his work.

Rudolph died in 1928 but Emily remained on Ysabel for many more years, working especially with with children and families. During the Second World War, when Japanese troops invaded Solomon Islands, a bounty was put on Emily's head but she was hidden and protected by her people, and she continued to lead them in daily prayers. She was awarded an MBE in 1943 for her work in Melanesia, and she died back in England in 1958.



Emily Sprott Is Heroic Woman Of the Solomon Islands

Our Soldiers and Sailors Find Surprises When in Those Southwest Pacific Islands

By S. Harrington Littell
(Retired Bishop of Honolulu)

New York—The day when the fall of Munda was announced the dispatch from General MacArthur's headquarters added the fact that allied bombers blasted Rekata Bay, 120 miles east of New Georgia on Santa Isabel Island. This island is known through Melanesia as the home of a heroic missionary woman, Emily Sprott, affectionately called "Mother" by natives on many islands, among whom she has lived for 27 years. The only white woman on Santa Isabel to remain after the Japanese seized the island, she refused to leave although forced to remain in hiding for many months and yet all the time kept in touch they threatened to torture and shoot unless they revealed her hiding place. One of these declined to answer and reported to her later the ordeal he had gone through. His silence, he said, was because "my tongue he stuck, he no lift." The other man, under rough treatment, said at last that Mrs. Sprott had gone to Australia. When freed he went at once to see her in the hills and, anticipating her rebuke for such a statement, exclaimed, "But you did go to Australia; I only did not say that you had come back."

In spite of the vigilance of Japanese soldiers Mrs. Sprott continued to gather Christians together morn-

Emily set up the first Mothers' Union group in Melanesia on Ysabel in 1919 (or possibly 1930, reports differ). Another group was started on Malaita in 1931 by Gwendoline Mason, and then in 1938 Joyce Butu and Nellie Furgen set a group up in Vanuatu. In the century or so since the Melanesian Mothers' Union began it has flourished and spread and now has over 16,000 members across all the Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

- **Emily Sprott's faith shaped the course of her life. How has your faith shaped the course of your life?**

The work of the Mothers' Union globally is shaped around three "pillars of impact" - Ending Poverty, Ending Injustice, and Ending Violence. These pillars are echoed in the work of the Mothers' Union in Melanesia too *(Provincial President, Sandra Rollins, left).*

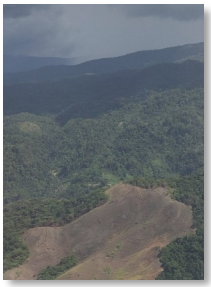


Across the provinces the MU run Positive Parenting courses in communities and in prisons, supporting families with parenting skills. This program addresses issues such as domestic violence, which is a huge issue in Melanesia, as well as child abuse, substance abuse, and broken families. The Mothers' Union support women from all sorts of backgrounds with building self determination and gaining financial independence.

They also have literacy projects to support women who would like to be leaders in their communities but need some extra help with literacy to be able to do this well.

The UN recognises that addressing gender inequality is a vital foundation for building a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. This practical work of women supporting women makes a significant difference to communities across Melanesia.

- **How does the work of the Mothers' Union support the task of addressing gender inequality? Is there anything that is distinctive about a Christian approach to issues of justice and inequality?**



One of the biggest environmental challenges facing islands across Melanesia is illegal, or barely legal, logging and mining. Companies, usually based in other nations, will approach communities and make promises about investing in education, infrastructure, or medical facilities, in return for handshake agreements to undertake logging and mining on communal, or 'customary', land.

However these benefits are rarely seen before the companies move on, leaving broken trust and divided communities behind. The people of these communities are not powerless, however, and there are increasing attempts to combat the spread of these illegal practices. Some of these are through the courts, and some are more creative.

In one recent court case, the Nakrupe Ulu Women's Organisation from the Hograno Highlands of Ysabel led a community effort to gather video evidence of illegal practices, leading to a timber company being sued for breaching their logging license conditions and the environmental damage this has caused. In another case, the local Mothers Union successfully organised a rota of women to yell and scream at the loggers until they stopped!

- **The women in these cases took very different approaches to combatting the scourge of illegal logging and mining. Has your faith ever inspired you to take action to prevent something illegal or unjust? What approach did you take?**
- **Why do you think it is often women who are leading the efforts to combat these community problems?**

Bible Study: Judges 4.1-9

[1]The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of
the Lord, after Ehud died. [2]So the Lord sold them into the
hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor;
the commander of his army was Sisera. [3]Then the Israelites
cried out to the Lord for help, for he had nine hundred
chariots of iron and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly for
twenty years.

[4]At that time Deborah, a prophet, was judging Israel. [5]She
used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and
Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came
up to her for judgment.

[6]She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from
Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of
Israel, commands you, 'Position yourself at Mount Tabor,
taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe
of Zebulun. [7]I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's
army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and
his troops, and I will give him into your hand.' "

[8]Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you
will not go with me, I will not go." [9]And she said, "I will surely
go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going
will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into
the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with
Barak to Kedesh.

Background notes: In the time before the people of Israel were led by kings, they looked to Judges like Deborah for leadership and wisdom. In this story Deborah is called upon to help free them from under the rule of an oppressive empire.

- **Read through the passage together** (do your best with any unfamiliar names!). **What role does Deborah play in this community? In what ways do you see her authority and influence playing out in this story?**
- **Can you see any parallels between the role of Deborah in this passage and the Mothers' Union in Melanesia? How do they each stand up for their communities and challenge oppression and injustice?**
- **Are there other women in leadership, in the Church or in the world, who have inspired you in your life? What have you learned from them?**

Encounter

As I walk into the lobby of the Heritage Park Hotel I quickly realise that this is a completely different side of Melanesia to the place that I have experienced over the last two weeks here. It is my final night before heading home and I have been invited by the British Deputy High Commissioner to join her at a meeting of the Honiara Rotary Club.

We make our way into a conference room which, in its generic way, could be in just about any hotel anywhere in the world. After some food and introductions the speaker—Professor Lal, an Ecological Economist from Fiji—stands up to give her talk.

For several months she has been on secondment with the Solomon Islands National University, supporting them as they try to access some of the funding available to developing nations for Climate Change research. It is inspiring to hear about her work, but it also raises all sorts of questions about how Western agencies and institutions are still the gate-keepers to this funding, even though it is explicitly earmarked for developing nations.

Traditional knowledge and values are frequently undervalued and overlooked, and local people often have little say or agency in research done on, and in, their communities. However, Professor Lal's work has been focussed on building trust and developing a funding model based on equity, fairness, and agency.

Back in my room later that night I turn all these contradictions over in my mind, aware that I have barely even scratched the surface of this beautiful, complex region, but thankful that people like Professor Lal are working to hold on to what the recent Pacific Island Forum called "The Blue Pacific Soul".



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- ✠ Celebrate the work of the Mothers' Union, its sewing workshops, literacy programmes, couples counselling, Girls Friendly Society, savings clubs, and Positive Parenting training.
- ✠ Pray for those affected by non-communicable diseases in Melanesia, and for community programmes promoting healthier lifestyles.
- ✠ Pray for the Diocese of Ysabel, their Bishop and staff serving from Jejevo, Buala. Also the Diocese of Hanuato'o, for their Bishop, and the 15 parishes and 32 priests who serve faithfully.
- ✠ Pray for the chaplain to seafarers, as he ministers to crews and passengers through prayer and pastoral care.

A Prayer for Mothers' Union in Melanesia

Loving God, we thank you for the faithful witness
of the Mothers' Union in Melanesia.
Bless all who serve through its ministries—
those who teach, those who learn, and those who lead.
May their hands be strengthened for service,
their hearts encouraged in fellowship,
And their communities transformed by love, wisdom, and peace.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/news** *and scroll down to find the article titled "Empowering Women and Communities: Mothers' Union Training in Solomon Islands" (June 2025)*

Session Four: Learning Schools and Colleges

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round Four

1) How many education institutions is the Anglican Church responsible for across Melanesia?

A) 28 B) 53 C) 147

2) How many different types of banana grow in Melanesia?

A) 3 B) 24 C) 100

3) What is the official language used in schools in Solomon Islands

A) English B) Pijin C) It varies across provinces

Answers on p.42

Discussion

- How far did you have to travel to school when you were a child? How did you get there?
- Do you have any experience of schools or education in other parts of the world? How was it similar or different to your own schooling?

Story



Like most societies, education was informal for the majority of the long history of Melanesia, with parents or community elders teaching children the skills they needed for their roles in their communities. Formal education began with the arrival of the Melanesian Mission who, in 1867, set up a school at their headquarters on Norfolk Island—midway between New Zealand and New Caledonia.

Around 200 students at a time studied there, a mix of men and women, mostly in their teens or early twenties rather than young children, who had been brought from their home islands by the mission ships. Over the following decades more Anglican mission schools were established across Melanesia, with the Methodist, Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist, and South Sea Evangelical missions all following suit.

In the 1930s the British Protectorate government began to survey the state of education with a view to developing it more centrally, however the Second World War intervened and it wasn't until the 1950s that the first government-run schools opened. Education is now compulsory, though in more remote areas that is hard to enforce, and estimates suggest around 70 to 80 percent of primary aged children are enrolled in school.

- ✠ **Why do you think it was Christian mission agencies who drove the development of schools across Melanesia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? What advantages and disadvantages might this have had?**

Education in Melanesia is not just a pathway to opportunity — it is a lifeline. Yet, many children, especially girls, face barriers to accessing and completing their education. Dropout rates remain high, often due to financial hardship, limited facilities, and lack of basic teaching resources.

The Anglican Church of Melanesia has long responded to these challenges with a determined spirit, guided by a vision of "True Religion, Sound Learning, and Useful Industry." All the schools have a chapel or are linked with a local church, and have a chaplain who lead worship as well as teaching lessons. Funding for the schools comes partly from the government, partly from ACoM, and partly from the fees which all parents have to pay.



Each year, the Anglican Church nurtures students across 53 education establishments — 24 in Solomon Islands and 29 in Vanuatu — offering pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, boarding schools, and Rural Training Colleges (RTCs). The Bishop Patteson Theological College at Kohimarama offers theological training for priests and others, and the John Coleridge Patteson University, provides higher education and teacher training.

- **Why do you think there are still barriers to education across Melanesia? What are the barriers to education in your community?**

One of the flagship schools run by the Anglican Church of Melanesia is St Nicholas' College in Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. St Nicholas' college has over 1000 students in the secondary school, 900 in the primary school, and 350 in the Kindy. As well as the main school campus, St Nicholas' College also has a school farm at Lungga on the edge of Honiara.



The site was bought by the college in the 1990s, but it wasn't until 2015 that the Agriculture teacher, Chris, had the vision of turning it into a school farm where the students could learn practical agricultural skills. A number of different crops grow, and classes have the chance to grow crops from seeds all the way through to sale in the market.

There are tangible signs of Climate Change here too, such as banana trees that are dying from the heat, crops that are wilting because the ground is drying out faster than it should, and in the rainy season the whole site can end up underwater. Because of this, students are learning how to grow things that will be resilient in this changing climate.

- **Schools like St Nicholas' College are using education to help communities adapt to the impacts of Climate Change. Have you experienced any ways that education can help tackle social, community, or environmental problems? How might the Christian faith inform this work?**

Bible Study: John 6.3-13

3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his
disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was
near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming
toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread
for these people to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he
himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him,
"Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each
of them to get a little."

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to
him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two
fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10 Jesus said,
"Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of
grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in
all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given
thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also
the fish, as much as they wanted.

12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up
the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13 So
they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five
barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve
baskets.

Background notes: as Jesus's fame spreads the crowd following him grows. Jesus meets their spiritual need through his teaching, and their physical need through the miraculous multiplication of bread and fish.

- **Read through the passage together. How do the different characters in this story—Jesus, the disciples, the boy, the crowd—experience this miracle differently?**
- **Think about the actions of Jesus in this passage, and the stories you have just heard from Melanesia. How do they each take a whole-person approach to learning that goes beyond the intellectual to also include the spiritual and physical?**
- **Have you had teachers in your life who have helped you grow in more ways than just intellectually? What did they do? What difference did it make?**

Encounter

As I step out of the car the dust and the heat compete for my sensory attention. I take a mouthful of water and a deep breath and then I am ushered up a set of faded blue steps and into the classroom. The teenagers greet me with all the visible enthusiasm of teenagers anywhere in the world, but I've worked in schools for years so know what to expect.

The Principal welcomes me and I am given a garland of flowers. I tell the class a bit about me, my background in science, my work as a priest, the distance that I've travelled to meet them. After I've spoken for a little while I ask if anyone has any questions. Unsurprisingly the students are reticent to put their hands up.

The staff stood around the edges of the room furnish me with lots of questions about science, theology, the impact of Climate Change in the UK, even the structure of the Church of England and the UK Government (the young people definitely glaze over at this point).

Eventually one of the students plucks up courage to put their hand up and asks a question about the difference in weather between the UK and Solomon Islands (hotter in Melanesia, wetter back at home), then another asking what advice I would give them. Focus on your studies, trust God for the future, and enjoy the journey, seems a well received response.

As I say goodbye I'm struck by a satisfying sense of familiarity. I may be on the other side of the planet, but talking to a class full of teenagers is the same everywhere!



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- ✠ Lift up ACoM schools, their chaplains, teachers, and pupils, and for growing school partnerships between Melanesia and the UK.
- ✠ Pray for all those involved in faith-based education—from teachers and pupils to rural training centres, theological colleges, and John Coleridge Patteson University.
- ✠ Pray for the Provincial Cathedral of St Barnabas in Honiara, and the Dean and Cathedral staff.
- ✠ Give thanks for the Diocese of Temotu, for their Bishop and staff based at the Diocesan offices in Lata.

A Prayer for Education and Hope in Melanesia

Gracious God, we thank you for the Anglican Church
of Melanesia and its calling to nurture hearts, minds,
and spirits through education.
Bless the children and young people across Solomon Islands
and Vanuatu — those learning in classrooms,
training centres, and under open skies.
Strengthen teachers, leaders, and families
as they guide with patience, courage, and faith.
Inspire us all to walk alongside our Melanesian brothers and
sisters, that together we may build a future rooted in true
religion, sound learning, and useful industry. Amen

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/films** *and watch the films titled "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star From The Solomons" and "School Partnerships"*

Session Five: Refuge
Tetete Ni Kolivuti & the Community of the Sisters of the Church

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round Five

1) Which future US President was stranded on an island in Melanesia for four days during WW2?

A) John F Kennedy B) Richard Nixon C) Jimmy Carter

2) What proportion of women and girls in the Pacific region have experienced domestic violence?

A) 30% B) 50% C) 65%

3) How many of the 163 bird species that breed in Solomon Islands are not found anywhere else?

A) 24 B) 72 C) 134

Answers on p.42

Discussion

- When you think about being 'safe', what comes to mind?
- Have you ever experienced times when you have had to rely utterly on other people? These could be brief moments, or whole periods of your life. If you are in a group please only share as much as you are comfortable sharing.

Story



The Community of the Sisters of the Church (CSC) was founded by Emily Ayckbowm in 1870. Working with people living in desperate poverty, Mother Emily said *"Let reverence be our attitude towards the poorest, raggedest child, from whose coarseness and degradation we are tempted to recoil. We must look deeper, and we shall understand the child's true dignity, before which we shall bow the head and bend the knee. If we fail to find it, we must attribute it to our own blindness, for surely it is there."*

Through their practical work and spiritual care, the Community of the Sisters of the Church spread rapidly, running hospitals, schools, and childrens homes in the UK and increasingly around the world. By the early years of the 20th century there were Sisters in the United States, Burma, India, South Africa, and New Zealand. There are currently Sisters in the UK, Australia, Canada and Solomon Islands.

The first contact with Solomon Islands came in 1898 when the Bishop of Melanesia visited CSC schools in Australia. Over the coming years there were several invitations for Sisters to come and work in Melanesia, but for various reasons they were unable to do this until 1970, the centenary of the founding of the CSC, when three sisters *(above)*, Sr Berly from the UK, Sr Frances from Australia, and Sr Helen Jane from Canada, answered the call to begin a community in Honiara on Guadalcanal.

- ✠ **Does Mother Emily's challenge to see *"the child's true dignity"* beneath the *"coarseness and degradation"* resonate with you? Have you ever experienced this in yourself or others?**



The work of the CSC in Melanesia began in a house shared with the Franciscans, who arrived at the same time. However soon after the Sisters moved to Tetete Ni Kolivuti, a few miles East of Honiara. TNK, as it is known, means "Hill of Prayer" in the local Gela language, and was founded on an artificial hill that had been built by soldiers as a lookout post during the second world war.

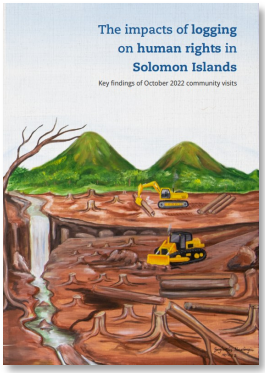
The symbolism of turning a 'hill of war' into a 'hill of prayer' is powerful. TNK is now the training headquarters of the CSC in Melanesia, and they also have seven other households in different provinces. Sisters take lifelong vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and support people in need in their local communities as the CSC have always done.

One particularly important part of their work is at the Christian Care Centre in Honiara, which provides care for victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse. It is the only refuge for women and children in Solomon Islands and does vital, life-saving, work.

- **The transformation of the 'hill of war' into a 'hill of prayer' is an important part of the story of the CSC in Melanesia. Can you think of other examples of this kind of symbolic transformation, in places or in people?**



The early story of the Franciscans in Melanesia is closely linked with the Community of the Sisters of the Church, as they arrived at the same time and shared accommodation at Patteson House in Honiara until 1975 when they began to live separately. The Franciscans' training house is at La Verna *(right)*, on a beautiful but remote hillside to the West of Honiara where around 60 Brothers and Novices live and work. They also have households across Melanesia, and share a commitment to the work of justice and peace.



Following in the footsteps of St Francis, the Franciscans have a particular vocation in caring for creation. As part of this they have been working with the United Nations to hold the government to account on issues of environmental justice. Because of their deep connection with local communities and global networks they are able to be effective advocates. This work culminated in a detailed report *(left)* on the human rights impacts of logging which is informing and shaping the government's response to this challenging issue.

- **The Franciscans' faith has led them to advocate on behalf of the voiceless, and speak truth to those in power. Are there passages or stories from the Bible that you can think of that might inform this work?**

Bible Study: Genesis 17.1-8,15-16

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to
Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me,
and be blameless. 2And I will make my covenant between me
and you and will make you exceedingly numerous."

3Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, 4"As for me,
this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a
multitude of nations. 5No longer shall your name be Abram, but
your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor
of a multitude of nations.

6I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations
of you, and kings shall come from you. 7I will establish my
covenant between me and you and your offspring after you
throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to
be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8And I will give
to you and to your offspring after you the land where you are
now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding,
and I will be their God."

15God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not
call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16I will bless her and
also give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give
rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Background notes: Many years earlier God had promised Abram more descendants than the stars in the sky. Abram and Sarai, now much older, have not seen this promise fulfilled but now God calls them by new names and reiterates this promise. Abram means 'exalted ancestor', while Abraham means 'ancestor of a multitude'. Sarai means 'my princess' in a possessive sense, while Sarah means 'princess' in a general authoritative sense.

- **Read through the passage together. How do Abraham and Sarah's new names relate to God's promises?**
- **Name changes in the Bible, such as Abraham and Sarah in this passage, or Simon to Peter and Saul to Paul, often bring a new identity or mission. The same is true of Tetete Ni Kolivuti. Why might a change of name be so significant?**
- **If you could change your own name to something that represents how God sees you, or something God is calling you to do, what name would you choose?**

ENCOUNTER

It's very muggy today, and if we were in England I'd say it felt like it was going to rain later, but I don't know if that's the same here. The car arrives and we set off for Tetete Ni Kolivuti. After driving out of the city we turn off the main road onto a gravel road. After another couple of very bumpy miles we turn off that road onto a rough track through the coconut trees until we reach the gates of TNK.

Sister Phyllis shows me around, starting with the Chapter House, which is beautifully decorated, the classroom where they teach the novices, the old chapel, and Mother Emily's Guest house. We go to the kitchens, where they will be preparing a feast in a few weeks for two Junior Sisters taking their life vows. There is a chicken sat somewhat dangerously in one of the fire pits, but I think it will be ok today.

We head down past the dormitories and the memorials to late Sisters, to the bottom of the hill where there is a pigsty, a hen house, and a large vegetable patch. Back up the hill to the refectory for refreshments then we walk past the chapel and down the hill to the new conference centre, past the Chaplain's house and the security guard's hut, to the classroom. Mother's Emily's Kindy and Preschool is a little school for 36 local children.

We make our way back up to where we started, past some strikingly colourful trees, and I wryly note that England will seem very dull and colourless in comparison. Somewhere in the conversation Sister Phyllis and I realise that we both studied at Trinity College, Bristol at around the same time. I don't think we quite crossed over but we know a lot of the same people and both have very fond memories of our time there. It is a lovely connection and a reminder that it is a small world really (especially in the Anglican Church!).



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- ✠ Give thanks for the ministry of the Sisters of the Church, and for the Provincial Sister for Solomon Islands Pacific Region. Pray for their work among families near TNK, and their gift of retreat hospitality.
- ✠ Lift up the Christian Care Centres on Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Temotu, and the Sisters' efforts to address gender based violence.
- ✠ For the Society of St Francis in Melanesia and throughout the world, and their work on environmental justice.
- ✠ Hold the Diocese of Malaita and their Bishop in prayer, and also the Bishop and clergy of the Diocese of Southern Malaita and Sikaiana.

Prayer for Religious Communities

Heavenly God, you call some of your people
to leave their homes and to live together in communities
as Brothers and Sisters.
Bless all religious communities working among us,
Especially the Community of the Sisters of the Church
and the Franciscans in Melanesia.
Keep all Brothers and Sisters faithful to their promises
and help us all to do your will,
after the example of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/films** *and watch the films titled "The Community of the Sisters of the Church Introduction" and "Solomon Islands Self-Sufficiency - Society of St Francis"*

Session Six: Hope
Caring for Creation

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
the maker of island and ocean, reef and cloud,
we praise you for the wonder of your creation
and the mystery of your love for us.
As we are bound together as members of the body of Christ,
in Melanesia, in the United Kingdom, and across the world,
so keep us united in faith, and connected in prayer,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Quiz Questions-Round Six

1) What proportion of global carbon emissions are produced by all Pacific island nations combined?

A) 0.02% B) 0.4% C) 2%

2) How much is Climate Change causing the sea level to rise each year in Melanesia?

A) 0.5-1mm B) 2-5mm C) 7-10mm

3) Coral reefs make up 0.2% of the sea bed, but what proportion of marine life is found there?

A) 5% B) 25% C) 50%

Answers on p.42

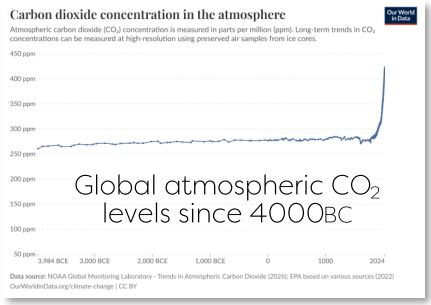
Discussion

- What are your favourite things in nature?
- The phrase 'caring for creation' is often used in Churches when discussing the environment. What does this phrase mean to you?

Story

When Bishop Selwyn first arrived in Melanesia in 1848, the levels of Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) in the atmosphere were much as they had been for the past 6,000 years of human history at around 280ppm*. By the time John Patteson was consecrated as Bishop of Melanesia in 1861, both Eunice Foote and John Tyndall had proved that CO_2 in the atmosphere stores heat from the sun like a blanket around the earth.

When Ini Kopuria was born at the turn of the 20th century, the impact of the Industrial Revolution in England and beyond was starting to affect global CO_2 levels, which had ticked up to around 295ppm. Around this time, the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius showed that these rising CO_2 levels were already starting to warm the planet. As the Mothers' Union started to spread across Melanesia in the 1930s global CO_2 levels passed 310ppm, and by the 1970s, as the Community of the Sisters of the Church began their work at TNK that level reached 325ppm.



In the early 1990s, when St Nicholas College bought the site that would become the School Farm, the upper limit of 350ppm required for a safe, stable climate had already been passed, and in 2003, when Nathaniel Sado and his fellow Brothers were martyred, global CO_2 levels reached 375ppm. By the time of my visit to Melanesia in 2025, that level had shot up to over 425ppm, leading to an average global temperature increase of around 1.5°. Of the global CO_2 emissions causing that rise, less than 0.01% were produced by the people of Melanesia, and yet the impacts of these emissions—sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather, and more—are keenly felt here.

- ✠ **As a general rule, the countries most impacted by Climate Change are those least responsible for it. Why do you think that is?**

The people of Melanesia are deeply vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, but they are not passively accepting their fate. Political leaders from Vanuatu have had a particularly high

**ppm means 'parts per million' so for every million molecules in the atmosphere, 280 of them are Carbon Dioxide (CO_2)*

profile at the annual COP conferences on Climate Change, holding the leaders of developed nations to account for their actions and commitments.



In 2019 the Anglican Church of Melanesia, supported by the Melanesian Mission UK, set up an Environment Observatory project which is headed up by Freda Fataka (right). There are currently 16 Environment Observatories across Melanesia, located at schools, religious communities, and churches. Each observatory is overseen by 'Green Apostles', who collect daily rainfall and temperature measurements, as well as quarterly measurements of the slope, crest, and vegetation on the shoreline.



The Observatories aren't just about collecting data, they are also a tool for educating communities about the reality and impact of Climate Change, and helping them to think carefully about building resiliance and disaster preparedness. As an example, because of the data collected from their Environment Observatory, the community at Sikaiana Red Beach Village on Guadalcanal have been able to estimate that they have around 10-15 years before they will no longer be able to live in their current location and can therefore plan accordingly.

- **Through the Environment Observatory project, the church is helping communities plan for the future. Have you seen Churches do this in your community or elsewhere?**

In May 1850, during a visit to New Caledonia, George Selwyn wrote to a clergy friend of his back in England, extolling the beauty of the place and friendliness of the people, and saying:

"If I could have wafted you during the last week to the calm sunny, blue waters of these reef lagoons, with the bright green and tree-bespangled hills...how truly and sympathetically should we have enjoyed the combination of everything that is highest in interest, or brightest in colouring, or most graceful in form, or most majestic in size. But this may not be, till modern science shall have attained to the utmost limit of locomotive power by enabling the electric telegraph to carry passengers as well as messages."

- **Modern technology allows us to be much more connected across the world than was possible in Selwyn's day. How have you seen this connection help us support and pray for our sisters and brothers across the world?**

Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 12.12-21,26-27

12 Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the
members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with
Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one
body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to
drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of
many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do
not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part
of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an
eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any
less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where
would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where
would the sense of smell be?

18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one
of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where
would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members yet one
body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of
you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of
you." 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one
member is honored, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are
the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Background notes: Corinth was an extremely important trading city and a meeting point of cultures. These culture clashes were reflected in the church who, as we can see from Paul's letters, were wrestling with differences, divisions and factions. In one of Paul's most memorable metaphors he describes the Church as a body, with each part having its own distinct, valued role.

- **Read through the passage together. How might this metaphor have helped the Corinthian Christians navigate their differences? How does it help us do the same today?**
- **Think about all you have read and heard about the Anglican Church of Melanesia over this course, and in particular the stories of the impact of Climate Change. How does verse 26 speak into this particular situation? How might we respond?**
- **Returning to the question at the start of this session, what does caring for creation look like to you? Does knowing more about the issues facing other parts of the world feel helpful or overwhelming?**

ENCOUNTER

As we approach the Theological College a drum starts beating and I am invited to sit at a small table in the centre of an octagonal open sided room surrounded by the students, families and staff of the college. I've been invited to give a guest lecture on the theology of Climate Change, which I do, but the real joy is the conversation which follows.

I begin by asking what they love about God's creation, which leads to a beautiful and moving discussion as person after person shares their love for creation, and their heartbreak about the changes that are happening. They speak of a deep connection to the earth, in some cases literally. On one island when a child is born the umbilical cord is buried and a tree is planted. The priest telling this story tells me that he knows which one is his tree and it connects him to his island even when he is away.

These tangible connections heighten the sense of loss. One student speaks about the destruction of Tabu sites, which are important to their culture and identity. Another tells of trees that have been chopped down on their small island to make an 'ecotourism' retreat – there is much wry laughter at that.

We keep coming back to the things they love about God's creation. For one from Vanuatu it is the blessings of abundance, fruit that grows plentifully on the trees which means that they can live peacefully with one another. They know not to take too much. For these priests from small islands there is a desire for justice, a longing for their voices and vulnerabilities to be heard. There is also a huge sense of the importance of togetherness – different islands but one people. It is humbling to be there with them and to be a part of their fellowship for a brief moment.



Closing Prayers

Draw the session to a close by spending some time in prayer. Let your prayers be prompted by the things you have read and discussed during the session, and the prayer points below from the Melanesian Mission UK prayer calendar.

- For communities affected by Climate Change and for the work ACoM is undertaking in monitoring weather patterns, coastal erosion, and other environmental changes.
- Lift up the Mission Secretary, and the ACoM Mission and Evangelism team.
- Lift up the Diocese of Vanuatu & New Caledonia, their Bishop, and the Diocesan team working in Luganville, on the island of Santo.
- Ask for deeper diocesan links and unity among Christians around the world. Give thanks for missionaries past and present, and for all who offer their lives in service to God's call.

A Prayer for Creation Care in Melanesia

Creator God, who drew the islands from the sea,
and fills them with life and beauty,
help us to cherish and care for all that you have made.
We pray for those communities and creatures
displaced by Climate Change, logging, and mining,
may they know justice, healing, and restoration,
in the name of the prince of peace, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Follow up:

Visit **www.mmuk.net/films** *and watch the films titled "Solomons Climate Change - Fishing Village Under Threat" and "Climate Change And The Church"*

or any of the other videos there that you haven't watched yet!

Quiz Answers

Round One:

1) C 2) A 3) B

Round Two:

1) C 2) C 3) A

Round Three:

1) B 2) C 3) C

Round Four:

1) B 2) C 3) A

Round Five:

1) A 2) C 3) B*

Round Six:

1) A 2) C 3) B

**72 species are found nowhere else in the world, but another there are another 62 where the particular sub-species is unique.*

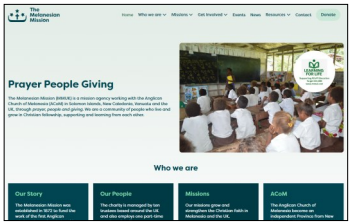
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Further Resources

The best place to start if you want to learn more about this wonderful place is **The Melanesian Mission UK** (MMUK). Their website has a wealth of information, stories, and more to get you started:

www.mmuk.net
facebook.com/MelanesianMission



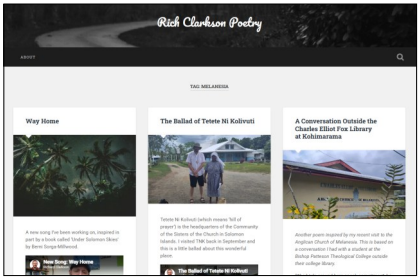


To connect directly with the work of the **Anglican Church of Melanesia** you can visit their website and Facebook page:

acom.org.sb
facebook.com/ACOM2020

As mentioned in Session Two, **Richard Carter**'s book **'In Search of the Lost'** (Published by Canterbury Press in 2006) is a powerful telling of the story of the Melanesian Brotherhood, and in particular the events surrounding the deaths of the Seven Martyrs in 2003.





Inspired by my visit to Melanesia in September 2025 I have written a number of **poems and songs**, telling some of the stories and reflecting on the experiences. You can find these by searching for 'Melanesia' at:

richclarksonpoetry.com