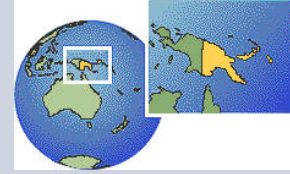




Ford Family Alotau, PNG



MARCH 5, 2009

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2009

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Marriage Celebrant

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities ..." Rom. 13: 1

Since April 2008 I knew that I would be performing a wedding in January. Beginning in that month I made application to be recognized as a legal celebrant. The nine month headstart did not prove to be sufficient for my colleagues at the office of Community Development. Both weddings that I officiated in January required a judge to legally sign for the weddings while I served as the ministerial representative.

When working with the government here (and probably with most governments around the world) I think it is most appropriate to say 'if' instead of 'when'.

Wedding Bells!



On January 1st, 2009 and January 8th, 2009 I officiated two weddings.

Poni and Loraine, two young adults from church, opted for a 'Western style' wedding. This included a ceremony at a nice local restaurant and a reception for a couple hundred people at another venue. In many ways it was a typical 'Western' style wedding with two significant exceptions. First, the wedding started an hour and a half late – for no apparent reason. Second, the scantily clad tribal dancers are not usually participants in western style weddings. Interestingly, I wore a tie for the first time in almost three years of living here.

John and Siggy, a second young couple from the church, opted for a simple 'church blessing' style wedding. The wedding took place at our house and was a very nice, yet simple event.

Comparing these two weddings I noticed the beauty of God's working in the world. God does not require pomp and ceremony to consider something a marriage. But, God also is not bothered by our celebrating something he ordained. In the midst of these two weddings God opened a door for us to introduce/reintroduce the Biblical concept of marriage. My prayer is that these two weddings plant a seed in the minds of young people as they consider a form a marriage that is pleasing in God's eyes.



**Decision Making
in the Church –
Alotau-Style**

In a North American meeting context the agenda item is presented, discussed openly, and then resolved. In Alotau we have a much more 'round about' way to make decisions. After the topic is initially introduced there is often a lengthy delay. Then each individual shares their thoughts about a certain topic. While we might say something like "I agree with Craig's idea". They find it necessary to retell the idea, retell why it is a good idea, and express why it is their choice. It is important for each person to fully express their thoughts. If one party disagrees we often talk until there is a clear agreement. I still find myself using external tools to monitor my pace. For example, when I think an issue has been agreed upon I count s-l-o-w-l-y to ten and if no one comments I know we can move on to the next agenda item.

Baptisms:

In this two month period there have been more baptisms than I can remember in such a short period of time. Marcus continues working outside of town with several villages to the west of Alotau. The response has been tremendous with close to a dozen people baptized Jan - Feb. Sorry I won't take the time to list them individually.



Especially rewarding for me personally was to witness the baptism of Sonya Diosi (above). Her family has been staying with Joel Siropodi and Joel encouraged her to be baptized. After one of the studies at our house she decided to be baptized and Joel baptized her that very night. I think I feature a story about someone Joel converts nearly every newsletter. He is a joy to work with and truly a humble servant of Jesus Christ.

I am currently having weekly studies with three non-Christians (Sally, Margaret, and Nick). Pray that God will be active in the process of redemption for these three people.



Craig Teaching Tuesday Night Bible Study at our House

Furlough 2009:

I wanted to pass along our travel plans for our trip to Canada and the States. If we are going to be near you we would love to see you. Also, we would enjoy having the opportunity to make a presentation at your church.

May 13th – June 30th – Beamsville, Ontario

July 1st – July 29th – Chyenne, Wyoming

July 29th – August 30th – Houston, Texas

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Prayer Requests:

- In April we will have our area wide church camp. Pray that those who attend might be strengthened and all might work out well for God's kingdom.
- Two newly married couples: Poni and Lorraine; John and Siggy.
- Those who are currently having Bible studies and considering becoming Christians – Sally, Margaret, and Nick plus many outside of Alotau town.
- Jeri and the health of the baby

We thank each one of you for your prayers and support.

May God Bless You!

CHECK IT OUT:

pngfords.blogspot.com

A blog detailing the life and times of the PNG Fords.

www.championschurch.org

Our previous newsletters have been archived on the Church of Christ in Champions website.



Family Perspective, written by Jeri:

It has certainly been hot over the past couple of months. While many of you have been bundling up to brave the cold weather, we've been wishing we had air conditioning in our house. We are very grateful for our ceiling

fans though. Except for the perpetual heat rashes on the kids, our family has enjoyed good health.

I've been blessed with another easy pregnancy so far, thankfully. I'm doing my best to take advantage of the prenatal care here. Each visit to the doctor costs two kina (\$.70). You just never know what to expect. I had my blood drawn twice because the results were misplaced the first time. When I went to have my results reviewed the second time, it took about an hour for them to track down the information. I learned long ago to carry a book with me, to relax, and enjoy the quiet time as I wait. I have had two ultrasounds on an ultra-old scan machine. But it's better than nothing, I suppose!

Aside from doing full-time ministry, Craig always makes time to be with our family. He's also often involved in some kind of carpentry project, exercises daily, and stays updated on travel and the financial and economic happenings of the world. Besides that, he assists his pregnant wife with dishes, changing diapers, bathing the kiddos, etc. He really is amazing!

The kids are doing great. Caleb is saying many words now, and especially likes to follow Hannah around and imitate her. Their favorite thing to do in the kitchen while I cook supper is spin around until they get dizzy. When Caleb starts saying, "Dizzy", I say, "Sit down!" and everything is fine. They are both very excited to have a new bunk bed, built by Craig. Caleb will graduate from the crib to the bunk bed after our third baby is born. Hannah is quite excited to sleep in the same room as her little brother.



