



Michael & Lori Johnson Family

Supporting the work of Bible translation
in Papua New Guinea and the world



April 2009

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Jesus Christ is Coming!

by Michael

What does that have to do with a newsletter from Michael & Lori Johnson? Our lives are not all about us, but about Jesus Christ. We go where the Lord sends us and do what He tells us to do, because we love Him and fully agree with his plans to bring His Good News to *every* tribe, nation, and language. Someone said, "Those who hear not the music must think the dancers mad." Those who don't know our Lord and don't know of His impending return must surely regard us and all who help us as being strange. Those who hear the music we dance to know better.

Our only important judge is our Lord. When He returns, we want Him to see us doing what pleases Him at that moment, and that we have been doing so habitually for a long time. His approval and His rewards mean more to us than the best that this world has to offer.



Michael's computer work for the Aviation department helps Bible translators reach remote areas.

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relationships matter.

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Half-century Celebration

by Lori

Bungee jumping... an elaborate party... a cruise... new sportscar... skydiving... these are all things people do to celebrate their 50th birthday. As I ponder my upcoming 50th birthday on May 16th, I am grateful that I am alive, especially in light that in Papua New Guinea, the average life expectancy for women is 56.

I have learned so much living in this beautiful country and one of the most important things I've learned is that relationships matter. It is rare to see a Papua New Guinean with a watch because time is not an important concept. If I meet a friend on the road I stop and talk (*stori*) with them. If a friend comes to my house I am expected to get them food and drink and sit and *stori*. If a friend calls, I stop what I am doing and give my attention to this person. In my Western thinking I have to force myself not to watch the clock and think of all the things I *should* be doing. Yes, we Westerners may get more things checked off our list, but I find that we also miss out on just sitting and talking with one another.

That is why for my 50th birthday, Rachel and I are coming back to America to visit and *stori* with many of you, our faithful family and friends. If you forget what we look like after not seeing us for two years, check out our web site. As for me seeing you... I'd love to receive birthday cards (hint, hint—e-mail ones too!) with pictures of you and your family. Rachel and I will arrive in the U. S. A. on June 12th and will be leaving July 20th.



▲ Lori playing soccer on a muddy field with teenagers instead of acting her age

◀ Celebrating the dedication of the Mape New Testament, which Michael helped get started by helping the translators set up software to speed the translation. Glory be to God!



More

Kids' Column

- ▶ Nate is in the Middle East, studying Arabic and international relations.
- ▶ Ben is at Grove City College, contemplating a summer mission trip to Egypt, working with people who live in garbage dumps.
- ▶ Evan has a year and a quarter left to finish high school in PNG.
- ▶ Rachel is thriving, learning, and growing.

Adoption Prayer Focus

by Michael



Rachel examining a harmless snake

Please keep praying for Rachel's adoption paperwork to be filed with the court by my birthday (the 10th of April) and the adoption decree done by the 10th of May. This would just barely leave time to apply for an immigrant visa for Rachel to come to the United States this June and officially become a

citizen of the same nation as the rest of her family. Please pray that we would find a way to effectively and quickly motivate the appropriate government officials to do their duty in a **righteous manner**, without violating any Inter-Country Adoption Board regulations.

Please also pray for Andrew Kwimberi. He is Chairman of the Board of the Papua New Guinea Bible Translation Association,

pastor of a church in the settlements of Port Moresby, a good friend, and the lawyer who is helping us with Rachel's adoption. In this picture, he is addressing the SIL Papua New Guinea Branch Conference.



Safety, Cultural Context, and Faith

by Michael



The Ukarampa Fence

Sharing the Gospel is an inherently dangerous activity. The danger may be minor (like ridicule by unbelievers) or major (like injury, torture, imprisonment, and death). Just read the New Testament, and you will see this is true. Or read some current news from Orissa State, India, and various other hotspots of persecution. We are by no means in as hazardous of an area as many of God's children. I would be lying if I said there were not hazards here. I would also be lying if I said that we would not be in more serious spiritual danger if I had not left a nice, comfortable low-crime, prosperous area to obey the call of God. So, I will tell the truth. The best place for us to be is where God has asked us to be. We are happy to follow the Lord to whatever hard or easy places He pleases. Nothing in this world, good or bad, can really compare to the rewards we look forward to in Heaven.



Our dog's primary duty is to be a good pet.

What about safety? The law of love demands that we do what is reasonable to protect our family, of course. We live in a fenced compound with 24-hour guards. We have bars on all of our ground-floor windows. We take care to lock our doors. We run security lights every night, making it easy for guards to spot suspicious activity. A couple of policemen live on centre with us. We have a guard dog. Believe it or not, even a cute puppy helps, as he makes noise when a stranger is near. He is growing fast, too. We avoid risky activities like driving off centre at night. We now even have mobile phones to call for help if needed. We also, as individuals and as a community, work to maintain good community relations and to represent the Lord Jesus Christ well. There is more, but you get the idea. It is generally a much tougher security stance than you might be used to, but just normal for us, here.

In the conflicts that sometimes arise between clans, we are almost always neutral, and not in any credible danger of attack by either side. (It is still tough to see friends hurt, but we are not living in fear about our own safety.) Although crimes against our community happen sometimes, they are usually after money and property, not to harm any person.

Is that enough? No. We look in faith to the Lord of Hosts for protection. We memorized and believe Psalm 91. We have faithful prayer partners. We have angels with us. We have the Blood of Jesus and the Word of God. Nobody is going to take any of us out of circulation before the Lord allows it. Perfect love truly does cast out fear.

Random Photos

by Michael

Lori told me that some of my photo choices were kind of random. She is right. Here is a rhinoceros beetle (which looks scarier than it really is), a clown-faced orchid, people attending the SIL PNG Branch Conference (now in progress), Koki the Cockatoo on my hand, and a lady dressed up for the Goroka Show. More photos are on our web site.

If you are reading this on paper, and would like our ecologically friendly, cost-efficient email instead, please email us. (We do a better job keeping in touch with our partners with email.)



Pray for Peace

It was a Saturday morning and I was expecting at least two women's soccer teams to come play in a soccer tournament I had put together from two nearby villages. As I was walking down to the school I could see lots of smoke from the village next door and wondered if it was just someone clearing their garden or if some people had attacked a clan and were now burning their houses.

It didn't take long to find out. Two clans in the nearby village were fighting and some men had started burning down houses. Since I had played on the women's team whose village was now under attack, I started praying and waiting to see if anyone would show up. About



House fire a few hundred meters from the centre fence. Nothing is left of this house but a few ashes, now.

20 minutes later, some women from the furthest village (about a 45 minute walk) came to me and told me that the guards at our front gate wouldn't let the rest of the women and some men come on our compound without my permission. I ran down to the gate and vouched for these people. Near the gate, I saw many of the women that I knew from the nearby village crying and huddled together. I went to them and asked what I could do and they said, "PRAY!" At that point, I wanted to call the tournament off but the young women of the far off village said, "NO!" They had looked forward to this tournament as it would be the first time for some of them to ever play on a good soccer field with goal posts. Usually, it is an uneven field, with long grass and bamboo goal posts haphazardly put up.

About 20 minutes later I saw about 20 young women walking up the road from the nearby village under attack. I couldn't believe that they had come! They told me it was safer on our mission compound playing soccer than staying in their village. I praised God that they had a good excuse to be able to have a place of refuge and be distracted from the fighting. We proceeded to play that day and had a good day of fellowship in spite of the fighting. Many of the young women stayed with relatives on our compound that night. I found out later that a friend's house had been completely burned down, that another man who had painted the inside of our house had his hand cut off from a machete and one of Rachel's preschool teacher's husband had been shot in the eye. It grieves us to see fighting so close and our friends in pain and conflict.

Please pray for peace and righteousness in the Aiyura valley.

Jesus Christ is Lord!

Michael & Lori Johnson