

John & Lena Allen

-serving in

Papua New Guinea



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Beloved Kunai

Nobody said it was going to be easy.

On December 11th, 2018, we made the most difficult hike of our lives. It wasn't the four landslides that made our trek so hard; it was the heaviness of leaving behind part of our hearts. Lena and I hiked to the Kanabea airstrip to fly out of our village for the last time as missionaries serving in Kunai.

Lena was able to catch a ride in the Kawasaki with Sam Snyder and Sarah Glover all the way to the top of the mountain, where they had to stop at the first landslide. I hiked up the mountain with only one companion, Andy Niko. Andy is one of our youth who was recently saved at Kotidanga Baptist Church, and he is growing. He stayed about three steps behind me as he watched me cry my way up the mountain. We met Lena and dozens of our friends at the top, and they helped us carry our possessions down the other side of the mountain to the airstrip.

No, it wasn't supposed to be this hard.

An Unbelievable Month

Landslides had taken out sections of the "road" between the airstrip at Kanabea and Kunai just before we were to return in November, so we determined that we would

use a helicopter to shuttle the materials over the mountain. The container that brought all the goods you friends in the USA had donated had just arrived, so we had two airplanes full of supplies, both scheduled to fly the same day. With all the weather issues we have had the last few months, we didn't want to take a chance on everything being stuck at the airstrip with not enough carriers to bring it over the landslides. We're grateful to SIL Aviation for flying the supplies in to Kanabea, and to T.J. Eiswald, their chopper pilot, who made quick work of the five shuttle loads of supplies. Three hours from the time the first aircraft took off with its load, everything was at the mission campus. I think that has to be a record for us!

With on-going health issues, it is no longer prudent for us to continue serving in the remote mountains of Gulf Province, a place we've called "home" for almost eleven years. So after returning to Kunai, Lena and I began packing up our things as we started to say good-bye to our fellow believers, friends, and patients. It seemed there was always someone coming by the house to hug and cry with us, letting us know how much they will miss us.

Sarah Returned

A week before we left, Sarah Glover returned to Kunai from her furlough, and everyone was so glad to see her again. She has served our people since mid-2010, and among the many things she does, she has taught so many people to read and write, as well as being responsible for discipling many of our young ladies. Yes, we're glad she's back!

Back-to-Back Big Sundays for Kotidanga Baptist Church

On **November 25th** Pastor Ben baptized 18 new believers! Our co-worker Sam Snyder also baptized their oldest son, Tommy, on that day. It was certainly a high day for the church! We're excited for all that we've seen God do since Pastor Ben took the work; he has baptized 59 people in less than three years, and he is doing a great job as a pastor. His heart for the people is evident

in his loving, uncompromising counsel with couples, families, and individuals. His expository preaching is Spirit-filled and Gospel-saturated, and it evidences a love for God's Word that drives him into the text. We are so blessed to have been able to work with him and his family.

December 2nd was Pastor Ben's first communion service. We did three weeks of teaching on the topic leading up to the big day. It was good for the Kotidanga Baptist family to come together around the table, remembering the death of our Lord Jesus and His sacrifice on our behalf.

December 9th was nothing short of amazing. Pastor Ben had prepared a special "last Sunday" for Lena and me. He invited local people to come, and wow, how many did come! I had the privilege of preaching the Gospel to a church house packed with dozens of visitors, using Paul's message to the church leaders of Ephesus as my text (Acts 20).

At the close of the service, Pastor Ben gave us envelopes with offerings from the church. One was taken from their missions fund, a total of USD\$375 to help pay for our plane flight out of the bush! And the other was USD\$125, which was taken up as a special offering that morning, also to help us with resettling expenses! We were not sure whether to laugh or to cry! Gratefulness overflowed from our hearts as we felt a deep humbling in our souls, because we know that these believers gave these gifts out of their poverty. Our Kamea people do not live on \$1.00 a day or \$2.00 a day—they don't earn money. They plant gardens and live off what they can grow, and that's all. There's no market to sell their crops, as they have no way to get them to town. The money they get is from hiking a full day to another village and bringing 44 pound bags of rice on their shoulders to sell in our village market, earning about \$5.50 for their efforts.

Following the service, several community leaders addressed those assembled, thanking the Lord and us for the service we have been blessed to provide (with the help of all of you back home who stand with us!). They all spoke of the ministry of Kunai Health Centre, which the Lord enabled Lena to begin in mid-2008. Some spoke of children and mothers whose lives have been saved; others spoke of the loving care received. A common refrain was that "Lena always showed us love, no matter who we are." Love is in short supply in this world, and even more so in this remote part of the bush. We're thankful that the Lord has allowed us to serve here.

Writing a New Chapter

We are grateful for our pastor, Matt Anders, who came to PNG in October to see us and discuss our future ministry options. We all agreed that we could and should continue serving here in PNG. At present we will be living in "town" where we need not be concerned with being isolated from medical help if needed. We plan to keep working on our Kamea New Testament project, plus recruiting as well as training new missionaries and interns as they arrive in PNG. The wonderful team on the ground back at Kunai will handle day-to-day operations of the clinic and other ministries, and we will continue to supply them with logistical support from here. This includes buying food, supplies, medicines, vaccines, baby milk, etc., as well as organizing flights to take it out to Kunai. In January 2019 we will head to India where I will again have the privilege to teach for Dr. Ken Fielder at Worldview (for the 4th time in five years).

We are grateful for you, our supporters, who have stood with us faithfully since we began this journey in 2006. The work at Kunai is continuing, and though we are shifting gears, we are pressing onward to what the Lord has next. There's plenty to do—open doors are all around us. Pray for us to have wisdom and grace as we minister the Word, and as we continue to seek the Lord's direction (Psalm 37:3-7).

Our final weeks at Kunai gave us many opportunities to share the Gospel one-to-one with people. The last man who hugged me before I boarded the plane is a notoriously violent troublemaker. He and I sat for a good while on Sunday afternoon as I took him through the Gospel again; at the airstrip he had reddened eyes, and tears were brimming as we hugged. I reminded him of his need to repent and believe in Christ, and he nodded.

There are so many like him, not just here in PNG, but all over the world. Who will go and live among them, investing *time* and *love* and *life* to make the Gospel come alive before their eyes?

Nobody said it was going to be easy. Will you do it?

All glory to Christ,
John & Lena Allen

2 Thessalonians 3:1

Please visit the blog: johnallen.ttmk.org

There are a lot of photos there from the last two months—we want you to see our "Beloved Kunai"