

Overseas And Northern Outreach Department
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CIRCULAR LETTER #4

November 2008

Greetings for the coming season to all.

It is difficult to comprehend that this year is coming to an end and Christmas is upon us, but what a happy and joyous occasion we anticipate. However, let us not forget that the Christmas story reveals that this event is meant to be a blessing for all ages and cultures.

Luke, Chapter 2, tells us it all started during a government census for poll tax purposes every 14 years amidst the busy years of everyday life. For this, men and women over 12 years of age were required to return to their home districts by order of the Roman authorities.

In the meantime, heavily pregnant Mary gives birth to Jesus in an animal barn and uses a manger for a cot because all other accommodation was taken up. Although the birth of the Christ is to be a worshipful celebration, our attention can often be distracted by commercialization of Christmas and the time of worship can often be replaced by time spent on celebration of a holiday.

Luke writes about the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 14. He mentions the angelic announcement, and in verse 20, the shepherds and their response after seeing the baby. When the shepherds reported this joyful event they were treated with disdain by the religious leaders, as shepherds were classed as 'ceremoniously unclean' and therefore in their eyes, hardly worthy of credibility.

Yet we know that for this very reason, the shepherds and their unseemliness were chosen by The Lord to be representative of we 'unclean' sinners when this good news of salvation was proclaimed.

So therefore, let us rejoice this Christmas as we take in Luke 2 verse 14. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men on whom His favor rests."*

**LET'S GET FOCUSED FOR
2009 ----- 2010**

DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FUND

OUR PROJECT FOR THE NEXT 2 YEARS

The decision was made after discussions with MARY SUMNER HOUSE that MU Australia will support Development work in Papua New Guinea and Melanesia, We will be working more closely together supporting workers in the following areas:

1. LITERACY -- Training
-- Computers

2. DEVELOPMENTAL FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM
Program Modules:
 - Health Education..HIV/AIDS
 - Domestic Violence
 - Agriculture
 - Animal Husbandry
 - Nutrition

The selected programs are to be actioned as the result of recent natural disasters. Melanesia was devastated by an earthquake in April 2007 and a cyclone in march 2008. Papua and New Guinea was left in ruins by a cyclone in November 2007. As a result, people's lives in these areas were thrown into chaos as some are homeless. They have little top soil left with which to grow crops and many families go to bed hungry. Aid workers believe it will take many years for them to recover, and more years if help is not continually available.

However, dedicated workers in Papua New Guinea have still managed to open their first orphanage and it is managed by Mother's Union. The opening of this orphanage is the result of the desperate need to house and care of children who have been left parentless by their mothers and fathers who have died of AIDS.

INFORMATION

The best source of information is ABM. They have the best up-to-date information on these countries, first hand information on what their basic needs are, and what further projects have been started.

Further, if you have access to the Internet, the websites for P/NG and Melanesia have some information. Mia Mia and Encompass have articles on both countries but news is limited due to expected difficulties in communication.

IRAQ

We must continue to pray for the Christians in Iraq. There are now 520 MU members there at St. George's Cathedral in Baghdad and they meet daily for prayer and Bible Study. They supply food for everybody who comes to the church, regardless of their religious beliefs, as well as providing ongoing support to The Mother Theresa Home which caters for children with severe physical and mental abnormalities.

BURUNDI

Mothers Union Literacy And Development program is being well received. Those men and women who are participating in this program are now passing on this information by forming Associations and developing income- generating projects as the result of this MU program.

Other positive outcomes reveal that the three main tribes, the Tutsi, the Hutu and the Twa, who manage Agricultural projects, are now learning to be reconciled across their ethnic divides. As one facilitator said, 'before the program, the groups did not sit together, but now, they can sit and eat from the same plate' . We continue to pray for lasting peace and reconciliation across this country.

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