

NEWSLETTER

Sunrise Bethel Christian School & Edai Christian School



FROM THE PRINCIPAL Rebekah Cook

April 22, 2020: SUNRISE BETHEL AND EDAI
UPDATE during COVID-19

On Sunday the 22nd March, 2020 the PNG government announced that schools would close for 2 weeks from the next day – the 23rd. This was 3 weeks before the planned school holidays and gave us absolutely no time to prepare! Thankfully, we had already put some plans on paper, and we had an idea of what we needed to do next!

On the Friday before we had still been allowed to have gatherings and meet together – because the virus had not yet reached PNG. In fact, on the previous two school days we had held our Grandparents days at each campus. It was a wonderful celebration of this older generation with some grandparents connecting for the first time and sharing the joy of their grandchildren's learning.

The staff of both campuses all came in on that first day of closure, and in record time created learning packs for our students which were handed out to families over the next two days.

The government in PNG would later decide that schools would not reopen for a further 3 weeks – which ran over our holidays but created a challenge for our families and staff in regard to learning for our students. No-one really knew when holidays should be applied and when school time should be happening!

In the meantime, restrictions in PNG have grown, with current restrictions banning all public transport, along with many of the similar restrictions we have in Australia. Public transport is significant for our school as most of our community use public transport – (only 2 staff members hold a current driver's license and only a few staff families have cars.)

Additionally, restrictions of movement between provinces have been put in place. Our two schools are in different provinces despite being only 30 minutes apart. The staff usually cross the provincial border to get to work. This has now become difficult and they are in the process of obtaining a pass to cross the border to get to Edai Christian School, our new campus, before schools reopen.

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Many of our families do not have email addresses, do not access social media and do not have a computer in the home. Then at the other extreme we have families that have all of this digital access and more! And so, we are working at putting together online learning through Google Drive for those who can access it. The next obstacle to the staff preparation, is that our staff cannot get to work to access their work computers to access and create tasks for their students. (Many of them don't have electricity at home and certainly could not afford to have enough data for this process – so they need to use school Wi-Fi.) They are keen and avid learners and are trying to do what they can to support the learning of the students in their classes. Some of them have walked many kilometres to the school just so that they can get work together for their students.

The government announced yesterday that they are delaying the opening of schools for yet another week. And we expect further announcements today. At this time PNG has just 7 cases of reported COVID-19, and only one in Port Moresby. However, if it does take hold there, the results could be devastating for those who live in settlement communities and villages, and who are without access to running water or electricity.

It is a challenging time for everyone, and we are finding this not only challenging but a time of new growth in different ways from what we expected.

Steve and I are in Australia until the countries open up their airports to travel again. The isolation period has caused a lot of new learning to occur for us and our staff and I am very sure it will be valuable for well into the future. We see God's hand at work throughout the difficulties, and he will see us through.

There were a number of projects about to take off, which have been put on hold, including the secondary school buildings – which are ready to begin, and a new Early Learning Centre that should have been opening this coming week. We have grand plans for infrastructure around the school that has all been stopped for the time being. No-one can move around Port Moresby unless they are essential. This time has big impact for our very new secondary school which had just begun and our students who face public exams later this year.

We thank you for your prayers for our schools, and we continue to pray for yours too. Our theme verse for 2020 is Colossians 1:10, So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. It is our goal to keep doing this. We want to serve the Lord with everything we have and grow in him! Fruit is already coming – so differently from what we thought, but in God's timing and plan.

God bless you all.

Support Needed!

The riverbank along our school has recently collapsed and caused considerable damage. The team in PNG has set up a temporary retaining wall, although we are seeking donations so that a more suitable solution can be implemented.

We need a 20-metre long retaining wall. The engineered permanent solution will cost around AUD 100,000, which is far outside our budget capacity given the other building projects and the uncertainty due to COVID-19.

If you are willing to support the desperate needs in PNG, please go to:

www.pngcontainer-gdg-j573n.raisely.com/

