



Bougainville Mission office, Rumba, Bougainville.

Photo courtesy of Pauline Yorio.

# Bougainville Mission, South Pacific Division

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## BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

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The Bougainville Mission is the Seventh-day Adventist administrative entity for the island of Bougainville, a province of Papua New Guinea located in the southwest Pacific Ocean.<sup>1</sup>

The territory of the Bougainville Mission is the “Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea.”<sup>2</sup> It is a part of and responsible to the Papua New Guinea Union Mission, which is headquartered in Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea and is the only Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church union in the country of Papua New Guinea. The union comprises nine local missions and one local conference: the Central Papua Mission, the Bougainville Mission, the New Britain New Ireland Mission, the Northern and Milne Bay Mission, Morobe Mission, Madang Manus Mission, Sepik Mission, Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission, Western Highlands Mission, and South West Papuan Mission. The administrative office of the Bougainville Mission is located at Rumba, Arawa 355, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. The postal address is P.O. Box 148, Arawa 355, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.<sup>3</sup>

The mission operates under the General Conference and South Pacific Division (SPD) operating policies. Those policies state that the officers of the Bougainville Mission are elected by the Papua New Guinea Union Mission:<sup>4</sup> “The mission president elected by the union is a member of the union committee and is the union representative in the conduct of the work in the mission. The president shall, with the local mission committee, supervise and carry forward the work in the local mission.”<sup>5</sup> Mission associate officers and departmental personnel are elected at a duly called session of the mission, where representatives from all churches in the mission are present.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of 2018, the Bougainville Mission was listed as having 45 organized churches and 131 companies. Church membership was 8,164.<sup>7</sup> The mission had 99 active employees. Its tithe receipts for 2016 totaled US\$682,880. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$151.45,<sup>8</sup> the highest of the missions in the Papua New Guinea Union.

## Schools of the Bougainville Mission

At the end of 2018, there were 21 Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) primary schools and 1 SDA secondary school in the mission, with a total of 2,156 students. There were 113 teaching staff members in the schools:<sup>9</sup> All primary schools offer grades one to six. Devere SDA High School offers grades seven and eight. In addition, there were 28 preparatory schools in the mission with an enrollment of 525 students.<sup>10</sup>

A list of the schools in the mission with their 2018 enrollment and number of teaching staff follows.

Anamora SDA Primary School enrollment: 70; teaching staff: 3

Barava SDA Primary School enrollment: 81; teaching staff: 6

Baros Adventist Primary School enrollment: 45; teaching staff: 4

Darutue SDA Primary School enrollment: 112; teaching staff: 6

Devere SDA High School enrollment: 323; teaching staff: 11

Gina SDA Primary School enrollment: 64; teaching staff: 4  
Hairu SDA Primary School enrollment: 68; teaching staff: 6  
Huraturi SDA Primary School enrollment: 84; teaching staff: 3  
Itae SDA Primary School enrollment: 108; teaching staff: 6  
Kepesia SDA Primary School enrollment: 127; teaching staff: 6  
Konuku SDA Primary School enrollment: 76; teaching staff: 3  
Magini SDA Primary School enrollment: 57; teaching staff: 4  
Namerai SDA Primary School enrollment: 124; teaching staff: 4  
Nulendi SDA Primary School enrollment: 91; teaching staff: 6  
Pavaire SDA Primary School enrollment: 53; teaching staff: 3  
Periove SDA Primary School enrollment: 117; teaching staff: 6  
Sirangta SDA Primary School enrollment: 45; teaching staff: 2  
Tanginare SDA Primary School enrollment: 122; teaching staff: 6  
Tavatava SDA Primary School enrollment: 123; teaching staff: 6  
Tokiai SDA Primary School enrollment: 58; teaching staff: 6  
Tugiogu SDA Primary School enrollment: 104; teaching staff: 6  
Wasinabus SDA Primary School enrollment: 104; teaching staff: 6

## The Arrival and Early History of the SDA Church in Bougainville

In January 1924, a young man from southern Bougainville traveled to the Telina SDA school in the Marovo Lagoon of the western Solomon Islands and, while there, requested a missionary for his people. On July 30, 1924, Harold Wicks and the young student sailed from the Marovo Lagoon on the *Melanesia*. After calling in at Dovele to pick up Robert Tutty and a Solomon Islands missionary named Nano and his wife, Pigiduri, they sailed to Kieta, Bougainville, arriving on August 5. After receiving clearance from the government authorities at Kieta, the vessel sailed back along the southeast coast of Bougainville to the village of Lavilai, arriving the following day.<sup>11</sup>

As soon as the *Melanesia* anchored about a mile from Lavilai, a canoe carrying a number of men came out to the vessel. After ascertaining that the visitors were from the "Seventh-day Mission," the men were pleased and returned to their village. A short time later, Sikata and Ipunui, the two chiefs of the village, came to the vessel and invited Wicks, Tutty, and the others to the village the next morning. On Sabbath, August 8, they met with the

men of the village, and Wicks explained Creation, the Sabbath, and the reason SDAs keep the seventh day. To illustrate his points, he used a picture roll and the sand on the floor of the house.<sup>12</sup>

The next day Nano and his wife were left to commence working in Lavilai, and the *Melanesia* sailed for Kieta, carrying the chiefs of Lavilai and their attendants to meet with government officials. In Kieta, the chiefs expressed before the officials their desire to have the SDA mission in their village. The next day, they returned to their village, and the *Melanesia* sailed for the Marovo, leaving Nano and his wife and a promise to return with a missionary in two months.

On October 17, 1924, the *Melanesia* again sailed from Batuna in the Marovo Lagoon to Dovele. At Dovele, Robert and Emily Tutty were taken on board. They were to be relocated from Dovele to Bougainville to commence what was to be the first SDA mission station in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.<sup>13</sup> Udumu also accompanied them to care for the launch.<sup>14</sup> The following year, Nano started an outpost at Leulo. Udumu cared for one at Taki.<sup>15</sup>

In 1926, the *Melanesia* again sailed to Kieta, initially to gain clearance by the government health authorities. The health inspectors were Dewe Tare and Neviru. The inspectors were so impressed by the hospitality shown to them that they discussed the possibility of joining the new church with chief Birenka. Nevirui and Dewe reported the chief's request to those on board the ship, and a short time later, Tatti, a young single Solomon Islander, came to Doravei village and established a church, which was later known as Sivuna SDA Church.<sup>16</sup>

During their time at Lavilai, Robert and Emily Tutty established the mission station, and Robert ventured on several occasions further along the coast and also into the interior of the island. In April 1926, Emily left early for a furlough to give birth to their only daughter, Lucille.<sup>17</sup> Robert followed at the beginning of 1927, soon after the arrival at Lavilai of Alex and Emily Campbell.<sup>18</sup> This was the Campbell's first mission appointment.<sup>19</sup> A small cutter, the *Genitu*, meaning "love," was provided for their use in mission visitation along the south coast of Bougainville.<sup>20</sup>

By the beginning of 1928, Tutty, who had moved from Lavilai to Inus, reported that there were five missions in the interior of the island with Solomon Island missionaries, three small outstations on the coast, the mission headquarters at Lavilai, and a new station under construction at Inus, on the coast about a hundred miles north of Lavilai.<sup>21</sup> During 1928, the first baptism in Bougainville was held near Lavilai.<sup>22</sup> Three candidates were baptized, the first people to be baptized as Seventh-day Adventists in all of the Territory of New Guinea.<sup>23</sup> One who was baptized was Tounai (or Taunai) from Orava (Buin). Tounai became a lifetime teacher and preacher to the people of central New Guinea as well as on Bougainville.<sup>24</sup>

Tutty and Campbell did much pioneering work together, often taking extended journeys on foot and by sea.<sup>25</sup> In September 1928, Alex and Emily Campbell were transferred to Choiseul, leaving Bougainville. To replace the Campbells, David and Mabel Gray were transferred from Gatukai in the Western Solomon Islands to Lavilai.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the Tuttys continued in Bougainville, consolidating the headquarters mission station at Inus and

establishing the mission in Kieta.<sup>27</sup> They were in Bougainville longer than any of the other pioneering missionaries and saw great changes.<sup>28</sup> They eventually transferred to the Admiralty Islands in early 1936, after 12 years on Bougainville.<sup>29</sup>

In 1950, the Church began working on the island of Buka, an island of 220 square miles just off the northern end of the main island of Bougainville.<sup>30</sup> Oti and his wife were the first to be stationed there,<sup>31</sup> and the first converts there were Haning and his wife.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1990 and 1998, crisis conditions existed in Bougainville. The North Solomon Mission was divided. The government-controlled area of the province was administered by the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army-controlled area was administered by the South Pacific Division. During these years, the church experienced a lack of communication and a lack of finance. Many members were living in the jungle, while some lived in government care centers. Schools closed, mission employees worked without wages, families and properties were lost, and travel was restricted. Baptism numbers were very low; tithes and offerings were minimal. Grape juice was not available, and the Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division authorized the use of coconut juice for the Lord's Supper. Cassava starch was authorized for unleavened bread instead of wholemeal flour.<sup>33</sup>

Since the SDA mission commenced in Lavilai in 1924, the church on Bougainville has grown as follows:

1953	30 churches	659 members <sup>34</sup>
1960	16 churches	1,155 members <sup>35</sup>
1970	23 churches	1,900 members <sup>36</sup>
1980	29 churches	2,666 members <sup>37</sup>
1990	35 churches	4,896 members <sup>38</sup>
2000	37 churches, 9 companies	5,780 members <sup>39</sup>
2010	38 churches, 102 companies	5,627 members <sup>40</sup>
2018	45 churches, 131 companies	4,962 members <sup>41</sup>

## Organizational History of the SDA Church in Bougainville

Until 1929, there was no formal organizational structure in the mission territories of the Australasian Union Conference, which included the territory of Bougainville. In 1929, with the arrival of Griffiths Jones at Matupi on the Island of New Britain, the entity Mandated Territory of New Guinea appeared in the SDA yearbook. The superintendent was G. F. Jones, and the address was SDA Mission, Matupi, Rabaul.<sup>42</sup> This entity, as its name implied, included within its territory the whole of the mandated territory of New Guinea, including Bougainville. In 1932 the name of the entity was changed to Territory of New Guinea.<sup>43</sup>

In 1945, the Papua–New Guinea Mission was formed.<sup>44</sup> This mission included all the territory of the former Territory of New Guinea Mission and the former Papua Mission, which had been organized in 1928.<sup>45</sup> The Papua–New Guinea Mission headquarters was located in Port Moresby, Papua. The first superintendent was R. A. R. Thrift.<sup>46</sup> In 1946 the name of the Papua–New Guinea Mission was changed to Papua North East New Guinea Mission.<sup>47</sup>

In 1947 the Bismarck Archipelago Mission was formed from some of the territory that had been included in the Papua–New Guinea Mission. In 1947, New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, the Saint Matthias Group, the Admiralty Group, and the adjacent islands were taken out of the Papua–New Guinea Mission and organized as the Bismarck Archipelago Mission.<sup>48</sup> The remaining territory of the Papua–New Guinea Mission was then organized as the Papua North East New Guinea Mission under the superintendent Robert R. Frame.

Until 1949, all of the local conference and mission entities throughout the territory of the Australasian Union Conference related directly to the union headquarters in Sydney. But at a specially called session of the Australasian Union from August 16 to 21, 1948, a proposal for a major reorganization was presented, discussed, and approved. Australia and New Zealand were divided between two union conferences known as the Trans-Tasman Union Conference, and the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference. The mission territories were also divided into two union missions known as the Coral Sea Union Mission and the Central Pacific Union Mission.

In that reorganization in 1949, the Bismarck Archipelago Mission, which included the territory of Bougainville, became one of the local missions of the Coral Sea Union Mission. The territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was “Papua, the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1953, the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into the Coral Sea Union Mission and the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission.<sup>50</sup> The Coral Sea Union Mission continued to have its headquarters in Lae, New Guinea. The reorganized Coral Sea Union now had as its territory “Papua and the mainland of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, comprising the Central Papuan, Eastern Highlands, Eastern Papuan, Madang, Morobe, Sepik, Papuan Gulf, Western Highlands, and Western Papuan Missions.”<sup>51</sup>

When the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into a Coral Sea Union Mission and a Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission, the Bougainville Mission was formally organized.<sup>52</sup> The Bougainville Mission was part of the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission, which had its headquarters in Rabaul on the island of New Britain. Its territory was “Admiralty Islands, St. Matthias Group, New Hanover, New Ireland and adjacent islands, New Britain and adjacent islands, Bougainville and adjacent islands, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate; comprising the Bougainville, Eastern Solomon Islands, Malaita, Manus, New Britain, New Ireland, and Western Solomon Islands Missions.”<sup>53</sup>

The territory of the Bougainville Mission was designated as “Bougainville.” The population of the island at that time was 44,143. There were 30 SDA churches and 609 church members. The headquarters of the mission was at Inus, and Cyril Pascoe was the first president and treasurer.<sup>54</sup> When established, the headquarters of the

mission was at Inus, where it remained until 1972.<sup>55</sup>

In 1972 there was yet another reorganization of the union missions in the Australasian Division. The new headquarters for the Bougainville Mission was established at Rumba, near Arawa.<sup>56</sup> A Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) was formed with ten local missions.<sup>57</sup> They were as follows:

Bougainville Mission, established in 1929, organized in 1953

Central Papuan Mission, established in 1908

Eastern Highlands Mission, organized in 1953

Madang Manus Mission, organized in 1949, reorganized in 1953, 1972

Morobe Mission, organized in 1953.

New Britain and New Ireland Mission, organized in 1953, reorganized in 1961, 1972

North East Papuan Mission, organized in 1953, reorganized in 1972

Papuan Gulf Mission, organized in 1954, reorganized in 1960

Sepik Mission, organized in 1953

Western Highlands Mission, organized in 1953<sup>58</sup>

The missions that had existed up until the reorganization in 1972 but were absorbed into other missions on reorganization were Madang Mission, Manus Mission, New Ireland Mission, East New Britain Mission, West New Britain Mission, Milne Bay Mission, and North Papuan Mission.<sup>59</sup>

In 1977, the name of the mission was changed to the North Solomons Mission.<sup>60</sup> Then in 1995, the name was changed back to Bougainville Mission.<sup>61</sup>

In 2000, another major reorganization of the unions in the South Pacific Division occurred at the South Pacific Division session.<sup>62</sup> Five unions were reduced to four by rearranging boundaries. This change did not alter the territory of the Papua New Guinea Union.

## Progress and Challenges in the Mission

The vision statement of the mission is, "To be a Spirit-filled church, always growing, excelling and leading in all aspects of our ministry."

The mission of Bougainville churches is to make disciples (Matthew 28:18–20) and witness in the context of the three angels' message (Revelation 14:6–12) through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

## Fulfilling the Mission of the Bougainville Mission

The pioneers of the SDA Church on Bougainville primarily used three methods to establish the church: (1) establishing schools, (2) working with and under the guidance of the village chief, and (3) providing health services. In establishing schools, they taught the local people how to read and write. They then sent them as missionaries to other parts of Bougainville, New Ireland, and the New Guinea mainland.

## Presidents

Cyril Pascoe (1953–1957); Lester Lock (1958–1959); Horace J. Watts (1960–1967); Ray D. Trim (1968); R. D. Donaldson (acting, 1970; 1971–1972); Adrian Craig (1973–1979); Raymond B. Newman (1980); Peter Pondek (1981–1983); Timothy Pakivai (1984–1987); Wilson Stephen (1988–1989); Jeffrey Paul (1990–1995); Tauku Gagari (1995–1997); Richard Rikis (2005–2010); Kove Tau (2011–2013); Kepsie Elodo (2014–2016); Andrew Opis (2017–2019)

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## NOTES

1. The author acknowledges the assistance of Lawrence Paai, general secretary of the Bougainville Mission, and Pauline Yorio, administrative secretary of the Papua New Guinea Union Mission, in the collection of data for this article.
2. "Bougainville Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 276.
3. Ibid.
4. "ADM 10.05, Principles of Denominational Organization," in *South Pacific Division Working Policy* (Wahroonga, NSW: South Pacific Division, 2018).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. *2019 Annual Statistical Report: Advance Release of Membership Statistics by Division for 2018* (Silver Spring, Md.: Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2019), <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2019A.pdf>.
8. *2019 Annual Statistical Report: 155th Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 2017* (Silver Spring, Md.: Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2019), <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2019.pdf>.
9. All data is derived from "2018 Annual Statistical Report of the South Pacific Division Education Department to the General Conference," unpublished report held in the files of the Education Director, South Pacific Division of the General Conference, Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia.
10. Pauline Yorio, administrative assistant, Papua New Guinea Union Mission, e-mail to author, June 24, 2019.
11. H. B. P. Wicks, "Entering Bougainville," *Australasian Record*, January 19, 1925, 3; W. G. Turner, "What We See Today," *Australasian Record*, March 23, 1925, 3. Lailai has been also spelt as Lapelae, Lapalae, and Lavelai.
12. Wicks, "Entering Bougainville," 3.
13. Ibid.; A. J. Campbell, "Drama Behind the Statistics," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 7, 1963, 1.

14. R. H. Tutty, "Bougainville," *Australasian Record*, July 13, 1925, 5.
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16. Yorio, e-mail.
17. "Sister R. H. Tutty has arrived . . .," *Australasian Record*, May 3, 1926, 8.
18. A. J. Campbell, "Bougainville, Mandated Territory," *Australasian Record*, June 13, 1927, 3; R. H. Tutty, "Bougainville," *Australasian Record*, May 30, 1927, 3.
19. Tutty, "Bougainville," May 30, 1927, 3.
20. Campbell, "Bougainville, Mandated Territory," 3.
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22. A. J. Campbell, "Bougainville Mandated Territory: In Contact with Spiritism," *Australasian Record*, September 3, 1928, 3.
23. A. J. Campbell, "A Battle with Heathenism on Bougainville," *Missionary Leader*, May 12, 1945, 7-8.
24. Ibid.
25. For example, see R. H. Tutty, "Bougainville," *Australasian Record*, April 9, 1928, 3.
26. David Gray, "From the Solomons to Bougainville," *Australasian Record*, November 5, 1928, 4.
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29. A. J. Campbell, "En Route to Central New Guinea," *Australasian Record*, February 17, 1936, 4; R. H. Tutty, "The Admiralty Islands, South Pacific," *ARH*, June 26, 1947, 18.
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33. Personal knowledge of the author as the secretary of the South Pacific Division from 1998 until 2007 and the president of the division from 2007 until 2015.
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45. "Papua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1930), 130.
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47. "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 75.
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