



New Ireland Mission Office, 1960s

Photo courtesy of Milton McFarlane.

New Ireland Mission, South Pacific Division

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The New Ireland Mission existed as an entity in its own right between 1953 and 1955, and again between 1964 and 1972. Between 1955 and 1964 the territory of the New Ireland Mission was included in the territory of the North Bismarck Mission.¹

The territory of New Ireland Mission was “Northern New Ireland and adjacent islands.”² Its headquarters were at Kavieng, New Ireland Province. It was a part of the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission, which had headquarters at Palm Beach Rabaul.

In the *1971 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, the New Ireland Mission was listed as having twenty-eight organized churches with a membership at the end of the year of 2,166. Its tithe receipts for 1971 totalled US\$13,938. Its tithe per capita was US\$6.79.³

The Beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Ireland

On April 18, 1931, the *Veilomani* arrived at Lomakunauru Village on the southern coast of Mussau Island. Gilbert McLaren was captain of the ship.⁴ There was a remarkable conversion to Adventism of the people of the Saint Matthias Group of Islands—Mussau, Emirau, and Tench (or Nusi as it was then known).⁵

A leasehold over land at Boliu, Mussau, was procured by the church in 1933. A central school, hospital and district headquarters were to be built on the land.⁶

Between 1930 and 1935, the work of the church expanded to Kavieng, the government center for New Ireland, as men from Mussau came to town seeking work.⁷

A literature evangelist by the name of W. F. Reid worked around the Kavieng township in 1935 and then travelled south down the New Ireland coast to Namatanai. This was the first contact by an Adventist with the people of this central New Ireland town.⁸ However, formal work did not commence there until early in 1950⁹ when, a church was organized at Damon in 1966. A little up the coast from Namatanai, this was the second church to be organized on the island of New Ireland.¹⁰

During the existence of the New Ireland Mission the Church grew as follows:

1953	27 Churches	1162 members ¹¹
1964	28 Churches	1788 members ¹²
1971	28 Churches	2166 members ¹³

The Organizational History of the New Ireland Mission

In 1953, with the formation of the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission, the Bismarck Archipelago was divided into four local missions. These were the Bougainville Mission under Cyril Pascoe, the Manus Mission under Karese Manovake,

the New Britain Mission under Eric Boehm, and a New Ireland Mission under John Rongapitu.¹⁴

In 1955, the New Ireland Mission and the Manus Mission were combined and named the North Bismarck Mission. The headquarters of the mission were initially at Boliu, Mussau. Leslie Webster was the president of the combined Mission.¹⁵ In 1956, the headquarters of the mission moved to Kavieng.¹⁶

All of the entities in New Britain and New Ireland were renamed and reorganized in 1964. The New Britain Mission became the East New Britain Mission.¹⁷ Its territory was designated as “the northeastern portion of New Britain and the southeastern portion of New Ireland.”¹⁸ The president was Joseph Mave. The North Bismarck Mission was divided into the Manus Mission with headquarters at Lorengau, Manus, and the New Ireland Mission with headquarters in Kavieng.¹⁹ The territory of the New Ireland Mission was “northern New Ireland and adjacent islands. The president was Roy Harrison. It had 1,758 members meeting in twenty-eight churches. The headquarters were in Kavieng.²⁰

In 1972, the East New Britain, West New Britain, and New Ireland Missions were combined under the New Britain New Ireland Mission (NCNI). NBNI was one of ten local missions in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission.²¹ The membership of the mission was 4,393, meeting in forty-six organized churches.²² The first president was Rex Cobbin and the first secretary-treasurer was Ivan Tutuo.²³

District Director and Presidents of the New Ireland Mission

New Ireland Mission (1953-1955): John Rongapitu (1953-1955).

North Bismarck Mission (1955-1964): Leslie A. J. Webster (1955-1960); Wallace Ferguson (1960-1962); K Manovaki (1962-1964).

New Ireland Mission (1964-1972): K. Manovaki (1964-1965); Roy A. Harrison (1965-1970); John Kosmeier (1971-1972).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. An explanation of the development of the administrative entities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Britain and New Ireland is available in New Britain New Ireland Mission.
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "New Ireland Mission," Page 109, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1972.pdf>.
3. *1971 Annual Statistical Report 109th Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 1971*, (Washington DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1971), accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1971.pdf>.
4. "Good News from the Territory of New Guinea," *Adventist Record*, November 9, 1931, 2; A. G. Stewart, "A Marvellous Transformation in the St Matthias group, Territory of New Guinea," *Australasian Record*, July 4, 1932, 7; A. G. Stewart, "All the Islanders Adventists, Mussau Island, St Matthias Group, Territory of New Guinea," *Australasian Record*, September 1, 1932, 831-832; See Mussau Emirau and Tench, South Pacific Division.
5. Ibid, Barry D. Oliver, "Mussau – Emirau – Tench Jubilee," *Australasian Record*, July 20, 1981, 8-9; Raymond Imona, "To the Adventist Family Around the World the People of Mussau Say 'Thank You,'" *Australasian Record*, July 20, 1981, 9.
6. A. G. Stewart, "En Route to New Guinea," *Australasian Record*, April 17, 1933, 8.
7. Nancy Atkins, "An Eventful Trip to Rabaul," *Australasian Record*, December 6, 1937, 3.
8. W. F. Reid, "Canvassing in New Ireland," *Australasian Record*, December 16, 1935, 5.
9. J. J. Dever, "The Bismarck Archipelago Enters New Hanover," *Australasian Record*, July 17, 1950, 5.

10. Lorna Harrison, "A Light in New Ireland," *Australasian Record*, August 8, 1966, 2.
11. *91st Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists 1953* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1953.pdf>.
12. *102nd Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists 1964* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1964), accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1964.pdf>.
13. *109th Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists 1971*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1971.pdf>.
14. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," page 83, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf>.
15. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," page 68, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1956.pdf>.
16. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "North Bismarck Mission," page 70, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1957.pdf>.
17. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "East New Britain Mission," page 86, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf>.
18. Ibid.
19. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Manus Mission," page 86, accessed February 11, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf>; *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "New Ireland Mission," page 87, accessed February 11, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf>.
20. Ibid.
21. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Papua New Guinea Union Mission," page 109, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1973,74.pdf>.
22. *110th Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists 1972* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1972), accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1972.pdf>.
23. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Australasian Union Conference," page 75, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1948.pdf>.

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