



The Morobe Mission office, Lae, Papua New Guinea.

Photo courtesy of Jermaine Thomas.

Morobe Mission, Papua New Guinea, South Pacific Division

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The Morobe Mission is the Seventh-day Adventist administrative entity for the Morobe region on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. Its headquarters are in Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea!¹

Morobe Mission is located in Morobe Province, a province on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. Morobe Province shares common borders with Madang, Eastern Highlands, Gulf, West New Britain, Central and Oro Provinces. Its headquarters are located in Lae, the provincial capital and largest city in the province, second large city in Papua New Guinea.

Covering 33,705 square kilometers with a population of 674,810 (2011 census), Morobe is the most populous province in Papua New Guinea. It includes the Huon Peninsula the Markham River and delta, and coastal territories along the Huon Gulf. The province is characterized by rough terrain to gentle slopes and flat plains. The main mountain chain includes the Huon Peninsula, Sarawaged the highest point at 4,425 meters above sea level, the Rowlinson range to the north and the Owen Stanley Range to the South.² It has nine administrative districts. Its people groups speak 101 languages, including Kâte and Yabim. English and Tok Pisin are common languages in the urban areas, and in some areas forms of Pidgin German are mixed with the native language.

The official definition of the territory of the Morobe Mission is “Morobe Province, Simbari and Marawaka Sub-Districts of Eastern Highlands Province, Kaintiba Sub-District of Gulf Province, and Kira of Oro Province of Papua New Guinea.”³ It is a part of, and responsible to the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) with headquarters in Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. The Papua New Guinea Union Mission comprises the Seventh-day Adventist Church entities in the country of Papua New Guinea. There are nine local missions and one local conference in the union. They are the Central Papuan Conference, 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 address of the administrative office of the Morobe Mission is Markham Road, Lae 411, Papua New Guinea. The postal address is P.O. Box 561, Lae 411, Papua New Guinea⁴

The mission operates under General Conference and South Pacific Division (SPD) operating policies. Those policies state that the officers of the Morobe Mission are elected by the PNGUM.⁵ “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.”⁶ 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.⁷

In 2018, the Morobe Mission had seventy-six organized churches and 228 companies. Church membership at the end of 2018 was 25,614, the largest of the Adventist administrative entities in PNGUM. The mission had 245 active employees. Its tithe receipts for 2016 totaled US\$910,897. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$53.04.⁸

The Institutions of the Morobe Mission

As of 2018 the Morobe Mission sponsored seven primary or elementary schools and one secondary school with a total of 2,738 students and sixty-seven teaching staff.⁹

The schools were:¹⁰

Anga Adventist Elementary School, located in the in Menyamya District of Morobe province 229 kilometers from Lae City via the Bulolo Road, had an enrollment of 133 and a teaching staff of six.

Banisu Adventist Elementary School, located at the Wau mission station in the Wau District of the Morobe Mission 145.5 kilometers from Lae City via the Bulolo Road, had an enrollment of 212 and a teaching staff of six.

Gabensis Adventist Primary School, located at Gabensis in the Huon Gulf District of Morobe Province 38 kilometers from Lae City via the Bulolo Road, had an enrollment of 462 and a teaching staff of ten.

Komako Adventist Primary School is located in Kaintiba District within the provincial boundary of Gulf Province. Although the school receives annual grants from the Gulf provincial government and the PNG national government under the Gulf Provincial Grant allocation, it comes under Morobe Mission due to a historical link with Morobe Mission. It is 144 kilometers from Lae City but accessible only by air. In 2018, the school had an enrollment of 313 and a teaching staff of five.

Lae Adventist Primary School, located in the city of Lae, had an enrollment of 622 and a teaching staff of fourteen.

Ragiampun Primary School. Located in conjunction with a High School in the Markham Valley, Morobe District. It is 141 kilometers from Lae City. The school has an enrolment of 325 and a teaching staff of eight.

Ragiampun High School. Located in conjunction with the Primary School in the Markham Valley, Morobe District. It is 141 kilometers from Lae City. The school has an enrolment of 263 and a teaching staff of twelve.

Tanam Adventist Primary School, located in the Huon Gulf District of Morobe Province 29 kilometers from Lae City near Nadzab Airport, had an enrollment of 408 and a teaching staff of six.

The Early History of the Mission

John and Merle Newman transferred from the Solomon Islands in 1953 to establish the Morobe Mission with headquarters at Wau in the Morobe Highlands.¹¹ Newman wrote:

A new mission field on the mainland of New Guinea, known as the Morobe Mission has been set up, and we have been called to lead out in this field. This is entirely virgin country as far as the preaching of the advent message is concerned. Apart from the natives employed at our union headquarters at Lae, we do not have a dark-skinned representative among the thousands upon thousands who inhabit the hills, valleys, and coastal area of the Morobe district. The territory includes the coastal area of the Huon Gulf, the Markham Valley, and

the hinterland known as Bulolo-Wau area. It is planned to establish our headquarters at Wau.¹²

In 1954, a teacher from the island of Mussau, named Lamai Lokopae, arrived in Ragiampun from Kainantu, Eastern Highlands Province, and established the first church and school in Ragiampun.¹³ A Solomon Island teacher by the name of Kituru arrived about the same time.¹⁴

Growth in the Morobe Mission initially was very slow. Between 1953 and 1960, no new churches were organized and the membership only grew by eleven members. In the next decade, there were only four churches organized and the membership grew to 542. Thereafter growth began to gain momentum. Membership grew from sixty members in two churches in 1953 to 25,614 members in seventy-six churches and 228 companies in 2018.

1953	2 Churches		60 members ¹⁵
1960	2 Churches		71 members ¹⁶
1970	6 Churches		542 members ¹⁷
1980	12 Churches		2293 members ¹⁸
1990	36 Churches		16313 members ¹⁹
2000	44 Churches	151 Companies	15708 members ²⁰
2010	63 Churches	313 Companies	20686 members ²¹
2018	76 Churches	228 Companies	25614 members ²²

Organizational History of the Morobe Mission: Structure

In 1929, the Mandated Territory of New Guinea was organized as a mission.²³ It encompassed the entire Mandated Territory of New Guinea (including Morobe), but was at first combined with New Britain and then New Ireland. The superintendent was G. F. Jones. The address was Seventh-day Adventist Mission, Matupi, Rabaul.²⁴

In 1932, the name of the entity was changed from Mandated Territory of New Guinea to Territory of New Guinea.²⁵ Then in 1945 the Papua-New Guinea Mission was formed. To achieve this the Papua Mission was combined with the Territory of New Guinea.²⁶ The headquarters were located in Port Moresby and the superintendent was R. A. R. Thrift. In 1946, the name of the Papua-New Guinea Mission was changed to Papua North East New Guinea Mission.²⁷ The territory of Morobe was within this local mission territory.

In 1947, the Bismarck Archipelago Mission was formed. Formerly its territory had been included in the Papua-New Guinea Mission. The territories that had been within the Papua North East New Guinea Mission, but now formed the Bismarck Archipelago Mission were New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, the Saint Matthias Group, the Admiralty Group, and adjacent islands.²⁸ The reconfigured Papua North East New Guinea Mission

remained with headquarters in Port Moresby under superintendent R. R. Frame. Morobe was within this Papua North East New Guinea Mission.

In 1949, the Coral Sea Union Mission was formed with four local missions.²⁹ The Bismarck Archipelago Mission remained as previously organized with New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, Saint Matthias Group, the Admiralty Group, and adjacent islands. T. F. Judd was president. The Papuan Mission was reorganized with C. E. Mitchell president. The Northeast New Guinea Mission was organized with territory from the former Papua North East New Guinea Mission which was not included in the Bismarck Archipelago Mission or the reorganized Papuan Mission. Morobe was included in this mission with H. Ward Nolan president. The Solomon Islands Mission with J. D. Anderson as president was the fourth local mission in the union.

In 1950, the Coral Sea Union Mission was expanded to five local missions when the North West New Guinea Mission was created out of some of the North East New Guinea Mission territory. What was left (including Morobe) continued under the name North East New Guinea Mission. The president of the new North West New Guinea Mission was S. H. Gander and the headquarters were at Wewak, Papua New Guinea.³⁰

The Morobe Mission was formally organized in 1953 when the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into a Coral Sea Union Mission and a Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission.³¹ The territory of the Morobe Mission was designated as "the Morobe district of New Guinea."³² J. H. Newman was designated as the president, secretary, and treasurer. There was one ordained minister (J. H. Newman) and one licensed minister in the mission.³³

The first headquarters of the mission were located at Crystal Creek Road, Wau, in the Morobe Highlands.³⁴ In 1956, the headquarters were transferred to Lae and premises were shared with the Coral Sea Union Mission in Memorial Avenue.³⁵ In 1961, the mission moved to its own compound on Markham Road.³⁶

Organizational History of the Morobe Mission: Union Affiliation

Affiliation with the Australasian Union Conference. Until 1949, all of the local conference and mission entities throughout the Australasian Union Conference related directly to the Australasian Union with headquarters in Sydney. At a specially called session of the Australasian Union between August 16 and 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 divided into two union missions known as the Coral Sea Union Mission and the Central Pacific Union Mission. The headquarters of the Coral Sea Union were in Lae, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.³⁷

Morobe Territory within the Coral Sea Union Mission. In this reorganization, the Papua North East New Guinea Mission which included the territory of Morobe 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.”³⁸ The headquarters were in Lae, Morobe province, Papua New Guinea.³⁹

Morobe as a Local Mission Within the Reorganized Coral Sea Union Mission. In 1953, the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into a Coral Sea Union Mission and a Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission.⁴⁰ The Coral Sea Union Mission continued to have its headquarters in Lae, Territory of New Guinea. The reorganized 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.”⁴¹

Affiliation with the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. In 1972, there was yet another reorganization of the union missions in the Australasian Division. The Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) was formed with ten local Missions.⁴² They were the Bougainville Mission, established in 1929 and organized in 1953; the Central Papuan Mission, established in 1908; the Eastern Highlands Mission, organized in 1953; the Madang Manus Mission, organized in 1949 and reorganized in 1953 and 1972; the Morobe Mission, organized in 1953; the New Britain New Ireland Mission, organized in 1953 and reorganized in 1961 and 1972; the North East Papuan Mission, organized in 1953 and reorganized in 1972; the Papuan Gulf Mission, organized in 1954 and reorganized in 1960; the Sepik Mission, organized in 1953; and the Western Highlands Mission, organized in 1953.⁴³

The missions that had existed up until the reorganization in 1972, but which were absorbed into other missions on reorganization were the Madang Mission, the Manus Mission, the New Ireland Mission, the East New Britain Mission, the West New Britain Mission, the Milne Bay Mission, and the North Papuan Mission.⁴⁴

In 2000, another major reorganization of the unions in the South Pacific Division occurred at the division session.⁴⁵ Five unions were reduced two four by rearranging boundaries. This change did not alter the territory of the Papua New Guinea Union and its Missions including the Morobe Mission.

Progress and Challenges in the Mission

The mission statement of Morobe Mission, together with Papua New Guinea Union Mission is to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20), and witness in the context of the three angels’ message (Rev 14:6-12) through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶

Fulfilling the Mission of the Morobe Mission

In order to fulfill its mission, the Morobe Mission has created a corporate strategic plan with key focus areas, an annual activity plan, and an evaluation plan to monitor performance both quarterly and annually. The departmental directors of the mission are assigned to produce resources for the churches and field pastors. The

costs are all captured in the annual budget.

At the beginning of every business year, district directors and pastors are brought together to discuss the directions, goals, and strategies of the local mission, which are directed at fulfilling the mission of the Church. The ministerial workers are trained and equipped with the resources. The territory is divided into twelve districts each with a district director to oversee the performance of the pastors who are placed in various strategic locations. The workers and the strategies are monitored quarterly and annually to ensure the mission of the Church is fulfilled.

Presidents of Morobe Mission Since Its Organization in 1953

John H. Newman (1953-1956); John B. Keith (1957-1961); Ormond L Speck (1962-1967); John H. Newman (1968-1970); Daniel Kuma (1971-1972); Timothy Pakavai (1973-1975); Philip Daboyan (1976-1980) Joseph Oli (1981-1980); Tony Kemo (1991-1995); Benjamin Hap (1996-1999); Jesley Farugaso (2000-2005); John Hamura (2005); Kove Tau (2005-2009); Piuki Tasa (2010-2011); Jeffery Pomaleu (2012-2015); Blasius Managos (2016 -).

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NOTES

1. The author acknowledges the contribution of Samuel Mollen, secretary of the Morobe Mission and Pauline Yorio, administrative secretary in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission Office in the collation of the information for this article.
2. Information supplied by Samuel Mollen, secretary of the Morobe Mission.
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9. All data is derived from the "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. Samuel Mollen, email to author, January 30, 2020.
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12. J. H. Newman, "To Search for "Gold" in the Gold Country of New Guinea," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, June 22, 1953, 6.
13. Information supplied by Samuel Mollen, Secretary of the Morobe Mission through Pauline Yorio, Administrative Assistant, PNGUM, email to author, July 2, 2019.
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46. Information supplied by Samuel Mollen, secretary of the Morobe Mission through Pauline Yorio, administrative assistant, PNGUM, email to author, July 2, 2019.

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