

SERVING IN PAPUA

I used to ask myself 'How will I know if God is calling me to the mission field?' In June 2005, after a series of other events and comments which all tied together, we clearly knew that God was calling us to serve him in Indonesia. We were told of the desperate need for teachers at Hillcrest International School (H.I.S.), and as I am a teacher, and we both had a desire to serve overseas, this seemed to make sense. But what about Chris? He'd spent the last seven years working as a greenkeeper on a golf course. He joked with me one night that he could teach people to drive tractors – but where do you ever see *that* need in missionary magazines?



We met with a couple the following day who were themselves heading out to the very remote part of Indonesia known as Papua. They told us about a tractor that had been bought for Papua, and there was a need for someone to teach men at the local Bible School how to operate it. Doesn't God know the things we need to hear to give us that extra little push in the right direction? From that time we decided that we needed to take a step of faith and trust God to close doors if this wasn't his will for our lives.

We soon realised the need for people to teach missionary children was very great. Without teachers the parents wouldn't be able to reach the Papuan people with the gospel. We clearly knew this was where God wanted us to go. Chris agreed to teach P.E. to students aged 7-18, and a workshop class for High School students. We felt a real desire to support the missionaries who were involved in Bible translation, flying into remote villages, medical work, church planting and many other ministries.

Since arriving in Papua in July 2006, we have lived in Sentani. I have taught two classes, Grades 3 and 4 (ages 7-10), with 14 students of 7 different nationalities! A particular highlight has been the opportunity to freely teach Bible for 45 minutes every day. This has been such a blessing and I praise God for the freedom to do this.

Chris has enjoyed teaching the workshop class.

The students have made a range of items, including wooden mazes, Christmas decorations, picnic tables, go-karts and candle holders. He has also enjoyed teaching PE with the High School classes. A highlight for Chris was going on the High School Outdoor Education trip. Sentani suffered a large thunderstorm on 6th March which took out two of the town's bridges, washed away a number of houses and businesses, and filled a large number of houses with mud. The High School staff changed their original plans to go interior, so the staff and students spent two weeks working alongside the people who had lost so much in Sentani. They dug out mud for most of that time, and at the same time built good relationships with the Indonesians. Chris especially enjoyed getting to know the High School students better during this experience.

But what about the tractor lessons? Well, things here in Papua don't always happen as smoothly, or quickly as we 'westerners' would like but finally, after Christmas the tractor arrived at the Bible School and Chris has spent Saturday mornings teaching one of the College students how to operate it.

We have many things to thank the Lord for over this past year – the good health we've had, being enabled to cope with and do things we didn't think we could do, the relationships we've built with national staff at the school and the students we teach, and the opportunities to share God's Word. We're continually thankful for those who pray for us and support us in our work.

Next school year will bring some changes along our path – Chris will spend more time working outside the classroom and I will be teaching younger children. But we're confident that God who called us here will continue to help and keep us in the things we try to do for his honour – to him be the praise and glory. ■

Emma McIlroy



Map of Papua & H.I.S. entrance sign



Above: Emma & her class
Left: Chris & Emma



Above: Workshop class for High School students
Bottom left: H.I.S. students & local people working together to clean paths