

My trip to Papua New Guinea. It would be much easier to say PNG, but that doesn't do justice. There were so many kind people that thought we needed to be treated like royalty. Iroc, Kedao, Cathy, Maiyupe, Frede, Daniella and Rose were our main caregivers, but many others contributed to our always being cared for and looked after. We were gifted with meri dresses, bilums, head & arm bands, necklaces, and (most valuable) lots of love. The children were always more than happy to have their picture taken.



The first Sunday we were there, after church, a teenage girl asked if she could get a picture with me. It was my turn to be very happy and willing. Meeting Lois immediately after my photo shoot was heartwarming. When Jenny & Janice introduced themselves as pastors, her eyes lit up and she informed us it was her dream to become a pastor. Throughout the visit she became more and more excited. Realizing her dream could become a reality, her smile was never less than ear to ear.



The highlight of our boat ride from Lea to Finschhafen was Jenny trying to get pictures of the flying fish. Shortly after she'd put her phone away, we'd see more. After a few times of that happening, she decided to give up. Almost everywhere we went we were greeted with song & dance. Our trips on the dirt roads in the back of trucks were filled with many a bumpy ride. It would take lots of our Kansas potholes to make one of theirs. But, we always made it to and from our destinations safe & sound.

Our reason for taking this trip - to help the women of the ELCPNG celebrate their 60th anniversary of being an organization - was highlighted with 3 days of singing, dancing, and devotions throughout the day. When I remarked we would get home two days before Thanksgiving I was given an odd look and asked if we only celebrated it once a year. I replied yes and asked how they observed it. They have four a year on average. Celebrating any occasion they feel they should be thankful for. As they did earlier in 2025 when Papua New Guinea celebrated the 50th anniversary of their being independent.

Being a part of the women's celebration and reading about the events of the 50th anniversary, I can tell these people are very proud and not afraid to show how grateful they are. Numerous times I was told "Thank you." and finally asked, "Why are you thanking me when you're the ones waiting on me hand and foot?". It was because I took the time to go all that way to help them celebrate. I hope during my stay with my new friends in Papua New Guinea that I was able to get through to them how thankful I was they invited me to be a part of their lives. I will always treasure my time there and look forward to my return trip.



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