

Forever Young: February 2025 Update

The Year of Change

Ecclesiastes chapter 3 reminds us that “there is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every matter under heaven.” It seems that the Lord has appointed 2025 to be a time of change for us, 3 big changes in fact. The first change we will face is heading home on furlough. Change number two will be graduating Brendan from high school and moving him on to college. The third change we are facing is a shift in ministry and location upon our return to PNG. All three of these seem to resonate well with Ecclesiastes 3:2b, “A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted” as we do exactly that, uproot and plant again. Here are the details...

Furlough:

We are planning on an 8-month home assignment from May through December. We leave in just 92 days! We will spend the first several weeks in California visiting family and two churches, Free Grace and Valley (Sunday dates not yet determined). In mid-June we have the opportunity to put the boys on a plane to Colorado to attend a two-week Biblical worldview camp at Summit Ministries. Not only will this be beneficial to their faith but will also provide growing up experiences that they don't get living in PNG (eg. Flying commercially and switching planes on their own in a major airport). The day after we see the boys off, the rest of us will hit the road, arriving in Michigan two weeks later after some stops to see some friends along the way. We will then be in Michigan for the remainder of our furlough time so, to Skiff Lake Bible Church, “Ready or not, here we come!”

Brendan:

Over the course of this year we will watch our son turn 18, graduate, and move out of our home. This has already begun to bring forth an array of emotions, including some leaky eyeballs. Brendan is a godly young man who deeply cares about his walk with the Lord. He is kind and leads others with a quiet humility. God has gifted him with incredible musical abilities which he has faithfully used to encourage the church. Brendan holds a lifelong love for the game of baseball and has a goal of becoming a radio broadcaster. To achieve this goal, he would like to attend Liberty University and major in Sports Broadcasting. However, he sees the value of being further grounded in his knowledge of God's Word, so he has decided to spend his first two years studying at Ethnos360 Bible Institute in

Waukesha, WI before moving on to Liberty. We thank the Lord for leading Brendan in this way and look forward to the many things God will teach him in the coming years.

New Ministry:

For the past 5 years we have served as supply buyers working in support of 15 church planting missionary families located in remote bush locations. This has been an enjoyable and fulfilling ministry that our family has all been able to take part in. We believe that the Lord fitted us for this service using our detail-oriented brains to keep track of the many logistics involved in this work. However, it seems like we have come to a point where it is time to uproot and move on. It has long been the desire of our mission leadership to hire PNG citizens to work in various capacities within our organization. A year ago, the Lord brought us a young man named Kali. He comes as an answer to years of prayer – the past 10 years by the missionary to Kali's people group, the past 4 years by Kali himself, and the past 3 years by Brandon. None of us knew the others were asking God for this. Kali is a believer with a strong testimony, has graduated grade 12 (a big deal in PNG), and has shown himself to be a learner in all aspects. Brandon has trained him in 97.2% of all things to run the supply ministry with the last hurdle being teaching Kali to drive and getting him a valid driver's license. We are aiming to complete this process in the next few months. We have confidence that Kali will take the baton of supply and be able to support the church planting efforts in the Sepik region for years to come. Having successfully worked ourselves out of a job brought us back to the drawing board and back to prayer seeking the Lord for what's next. So, what is next?

The Lord has given us the opportunity to join the teaching staff at Ramu Valley Academy (RVA) located just outside of the PNG city of Madang.

What is Ramu Valley Academy?

RVA was founded in 2019 and is the vision of Bill and Kelley Housley who worked with New Tribes Mission by planting churches among the Itutang people located in the Ramu Valley. Bill and Kelley, along with their two daughters, began their work in the Ramu in 2003. They have completed literacy schools, translation projects, Bible curriculum development and social projects among the remote villages there. While they understand that education is a nationwide challenge, which affects town and suburbs here in PNG, there is no area more affected than the remote villages where they have served and no children less likely to

make it to secondary school than those from the Ramu Valley. Besides having no roads, no infrastructure, and very little law & order or medical services, quality education (especially grades 7-12) is very hard to obtain. The PNG government has asked for churches, NGOs and other non-profit organizations to help bring education to those who otherwise would not have a chance. RVA exists to support the locally planted NTM churches in order to bring the next generation into a higher level of educational understanding and spiritual maturity. This project is also the vision of the Itutang village of the Middle Ramu and will serve firstly the churches of the Ramu who have invested over the last 6 years in making this academy a reality. RVA accepts students to educate and disciple who are recommended by the local church elders and who they believe to be a future blessing to the ongoing work in each village.

What will your role be?

Brandon will be teaching grades 8–10 Bible, discipling the young men, leading the students' work detail program, and coordinating sports and athletics for the students. Heather, while continuing to homeschool our younger three, will be helping with administrative paperwork and tutoring students in English and math. It should be mentioned that RVA is conducted all in English which provides a unique ministry opportunity for our kids. Given that they are natural English speakers, they will be able to serve the RVA students by helping them with their English-speaking skills as they join in and rub shoulders by participating in the work detail program, sports, and other everyday life events.

Does this impact your support or status with Ethnos360/New Tribes Mission?

Short answer, “No.” RVA exists under the umbrellas of Ethnos360 USA and New Tribes Mission PNG which means our status with our organization stays the same and we will continue to receive our support in the same manner—through our headquarters office in Sanford, FL. Our recommended monthly support level (\$10,357) will remain the same as well.

What is it like to move in PNG?

Madang is 158 miles away from Wewak. For you Californians, that is the same distance between Fresno and San Jose. For you Michiganders, that's about the distance from Detroit to Grand Rapids. Picture moving in one of these US locations. Your day starts by going to pick up a U-Haul after breakfast. Your friends show up at your old house about 9am to help

load up. You then reward their efforts with pizza for lunch and say your goodbyes. You drive for roughly two and half hours before arriving at your new house in the late afternoon. You unload for a couple hours then finish before dinner, call it a day, and BOOM! Your move is over. Not so in PNG.

There is no road that connects Wewak to Madang. The road that does exist will get you a quarter of the way there where you meet the Sepik River, at which point you transfer all your things from a truck to several small boats. After floating your life's possessions downriver toward the ocean, you can connect with the road on the other side of the Sepik River and transfer to another truck to continue the drive to Madang. Now go back and read that again. When you read "road" insert "one-lane dirt road with more potholes than Elon Musk has money." When you read "truck" insert "large vehicle with broken shocks that stops to pick up and drop off random passengers at every major village along the way." When you read "river" insert "crocodile-infested water system with possible chance of running into thieves and pirates who would really like your stuff." Therefore, we will not be moving by road. We could use our mission's aviation service to fly our things from Wewak to Madang; however it would require multiple flights and cost us upwards of \$5,000. Therefore, we will not be moving by air. The most practical and affordable option is by ship. After some initial research, we have discovered that we can rent a 10-foot shipping container and send our stuff out over the open ocean. This route will cost anywhere from \$1,500 to \$2,000, take probably two weeks as the shipping route goes past Madang to the port city of Lae and then back again, and has a number of other logistics to work out. So, we will be moving by sea. Well, our things will, anyway. Brandon and his weak motion-sick stomach can't even handle looking at the ocean sometimes. The whole process is a bit cumbersome, but doable, and this will be our first order of business once we return after furlough next January.

Recap and some prayer points:

1. Finishing the school year well. We've got 3 months left and we'll need just about every ounce of them to get school done before we pack and leave.
2. Saying our goodbyes to Wewak.
3. Brendan graduates! Transitions are abounding and plenty are yet to come.
4. Furlough travel - California to Michigan in June.

5. Needing to buy a car once we get to the States.
6. Being rested and refreshed on furlough in order to be prepared and ready to return to a new ministry, new location, and new team of co-workers.

Bikpela tenk yu tumas long beten long olgeta samting bilong mipela. Thank you, thank you, thank you for praying for us and all that we have going on in this year of change. In the midst of change, and although our hearts and flesh may fail, we rest in the fact that God is the strength of our hearts and our portion forever (Psalm 73:26).

Only Jesus,

Brandon & Heather

brendan, griffin, charlotte-amelie, & felicity