

Papua New Guinea Reflections Derek Boggs

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An Extraordinary PNG Welcome!

My trip to Papua New Guinea was quite an adventure. I'd never experienced that part of the world before, and it was amazing. The pineapple and bananas were out-of-this-world good, the scenery was spectacular, and simply visiting a new place like this was exhilarating. The conversations with our global companions were faithful and fruitful. We discussed how we can better walk together in a spirit of accompaniment and how we can learn from each other as the body of Christ. I kind of expected all of this – the beauty of PNG, the wonderful fruit, and the stimulating conversation. What I didn't expect was the over-the-top welcome we received at every Lutheran congregation we visited. Seriously, I was not prepared for their enthusiastic and warm hospitality! They call it a "Sing-Sing" and each Lutheran community welcomed us with one of these upon our arrival. And they were all unique and different in their own way.

As we approached each community in our vehicle, they would welcome us with their cultural dress, loud drums, and hootin' and hollerin'. It was awesome! They would jump up and down, throw flowers into the air, and place a lei around our necks. One time we were met by Mudmen who were dressed up in their hunting attire and playfully walked around us with bows and arrows. We were also greeted by warriors carrying shields and spears. It's hard to describe my feelings during each Sing-Sing. My heart raced, I loved the local flavor and tradition, but most of all I just felt REALLY WELCOME. Numerous times during these Sing-Sings, I was greeted with these words: "Welcome home Pastor Derek". Part of me was like, "Huh, I've never been here before" but the other part of me was like "Oh yea, this is what you do, this is who you are."

I give thanks to God for walking with these brothers and sisters in Christ and I look forward to our ongoing journey together.

