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Caring for the nervous system of the body of Christ

Solomon Islands Mission Report | October 2025

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Monday, 29th September – Arrival in Honiara

The trip from Sydney to Honiara was fairly uneventful—apart from the small matter of my 5:15 a.m. bus to the airport and the surprise discovery that Brisbane Airport requires an extra bus just to get from the domestic to the international terminal. (A note to future travellers: pack your patience along with your passport.)



Still, the day began with warm smiles and prayer at the departure gate as our team finally gathered for a photo before boarding. The team included Rev Brett Watterson, his wife Michelle, their daughter Amy and her husband Henry Fox (a native Solomon Islander), and their daughter Yzabel. Brett's other daughters, Liz and Lilli, were also on the team, along with Rev Graeme Liersch and his wife Susan—SOMA Australia's Chair and Secretary respectively.

Arrival in Honiara

Stepping off the plane in Honiara, we were met by a wall of tropical humidity and the humbling reality of life in a developing

nation. Within minutes, my back was glistening, my top lip had its own microclimate, and I understood why fans are considered essential rather than optional here.

We were warmly greeted by Henry's family and church community and bundled into a bus bound for Chester House—the Anglican guest house that would be our home base. Before we even found our rooms, we were ushered into the common area for a magnificent welcome in song. About twenty men sang in rich harmony, filling the room with sound that was as moving as it was powerful.

And then came the food—plates of buns, scones, rice, chicken wings, toasted tuna sandwiches, and generous helpings of tropical fruit. Knowing it would be rude to refuse, we all tucked in, assuming this was dinner. Not so! Barely an hour later, we were on a bus again, this time to Honiara Hotel for an “actual” dinner with members of the diocesan family.

The hotel, famous for hosting the Duke and Duchess of York years ago, was a curious mix of faded glamour and island charm. Its pool was surrounded by sculptures of sea creatures and rather confident mermaids. My “vegetarian pizza” arrived smothered in so much cheese I wasn't entirely sure if any vegetables had survived underneath—but by that point, I wasn't complaining.

Chester House itself was simple but comfortable. The linen looked like it had once belonged to an op shop donation (perhaps even one of ours), but there were clean sheets, fresh towels, and—crucially—an air conditioner and ceiling fan. That night, I was optimistic about sleep... until 3 a.m., when the power went out and with it, all my cooling options. Let's just say I was very thankful for the cold shower at sunrise.



Tuesday, 30th September

Our first morning began with prayer and a light agenda: a visit to the war memorial and a quick shopping trip for breakfast supplies. The dusty streets of Honiara reminded me of parts of Tanzania—crowded footpaths, tin-roofed stalls, and smiling faces everywhere.



One thing you can't miss in Honiara is the *betelnut*. Despite being technically illegal, it's sold on almost every corner. The locals chew it constantly, and it gives their smiles a rather Dracula-esque crimson hue. I quickly learned that betelnut, when mixed with ground coral and lime, gives a mild buzz and suppresses appetite. It's also one of the most addictive substances in the world. No wonder those red smiles are everywhere.

That night, mercifully, the generator held steady, and we all slept soundly.



Wednesday, 1st October

The day began, as all good mission days should, with another cold shower. Then we headed to the diocesan office for a meeting with the Archbishop of Melanesia and his bishops. Their warmth was striking. They spoke openly about the challenges their clergy face—especially confusion around ancestral traditions, witchcraft, and Christian teaching on the Holy Spirit. Their hunger for biblical truth was evident and deeply moving.



We visited the cathedral and associated hall where our conference would take place and began preparing fifty conference packs—complete with SOMA pens, notebooks, and beautifully handmade gifts from the Watterson family.

The presence of three ordained women on the team was, shall we say, *novel*. Women are not ordained in Melanesia, and trousers are not permitted in churches. Yet, the bishops received us with grace and genuine curiosity.



Later that afternoon, we visited the Mother's Union office to deliver a gift bag from Southlakes Anglican. The women were overjoyed. Their sewing machines—vintage and well-worn—are used to teach younger women valuable skills. Michelle and I immediately began plotting how to get more machines over there! Mother's Union President, Sandra, later made an impromptu visit to see us with Millie, one of her regional leaders. Sandra reiterated how needful it was for the women in Melanesia to be empowered to minister in the power of the Spirit.



That evening, we joined Henry's home village for a youth rally, filled with games, worship, laughter, and a hearty meal surrounded by mosquitos. The joy was infectious.



Thursday, 2nd October

Our conference began in earnest. The clergy arrived quietly, cautious and reserved, as many first-time participants are. But by the end of the day, they were leaning in—taking furious notes and engaging in lively discussion.



Brett opened with teaching on the power of the Holy Spirit and the armour of God. Graeme and Susan followed with biblical foundations for healing, and Michelle shared a beautiful message on forgiveness that opened hearts across the room. When the Dean of the Cathedral asked, "How can we prevent what's happening to churches in Australia—decline, ageing congregations—from happening here?" the question sparked a heartfelt and honest discussion. It was one of those Spirit-led moments of mutual learning.

My session, *Deliver Us from Evil (and from Muddying Lies)*, focused on deliverance ministry through a biblical, Anglican lens. I used Charles Kraft's analogy of spiritual "rubbish" attracting "rats"—unforgiveness, bitterness, unhealed wounds—until we let Jesus take out the trash. The clergy resonated deeply. Their openness was humbling.



Friday, 3rd October

Day Two began with Morning Prayer and a focus on perseverance in ministry. Graeme and Susan demonstrated practical models for praying for healing, and the clergy soaked it all up.

In the afternoon, I taught on freedom from spiritual oppression. A lively (and slightly fiery) debate broke out when an older retired local clergyman (who wasn't even invited to the conference) challenged us to explain how "deliverance" fits with island traditions and practices. What could have been tense became one of the most fruitful discussions of the whole trip.

Saturday, 4th October

A well-earned morning at the markets brought colour, noise, and the scent of coconuts. Stalls overflowed with woven bags, shell necklaces, paintings of beaches and sunsets, and carved bowls of all sizes. In the middle of it all, we found a café selling iced coffee and chocolate—a delicious miracle.



That evening, we travelled to Henry's village again for his daughter's baptism. The service was beautiful, the feast afterwards even more so, complete with fresh crab and the largest chocolate cake I've ever seen. The slice I was handed could have fed a small parish.

Sunday, 5th October

We returned to the Christian Care Centre—a safe haven for women and children who have survived abuse. It was a privilege to be invited into their hidden sanctuary among the palms.

Our Eucharist service went mostly to plan, until Michelle began the "Holy, Holy, Holy"

section of the liturgy to the *wrong* melody. Ever the supportive team, I joined in boldly—only to realise halfway through that we were attempting to sing the words to the wrong tune. By "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," our voices had dissolved into muffled giggles. The sisters later described the service as "different"—their gracious way of saying "memorable."

On the way back, we stopped at a little chocolate shop called *Amazing Grace*. Each of us bought a bar, charmed by



the packaging and the name. Later, relaxing on the veranda, we discovered it was 100% cacao—no sugar at all. One bite was enough to remind us of the wages of sin.

We ended the day with a celebratory swim and lunch at the Coral Sands resort—fish and chips, hamburgers, and icy chocolate drinks never tasted so divine.

Monday, 6th October

Our final morning was filled with reflection and gratitude. We shared highlights, challenges, and laughter from the week before meeting again with the Archbishop and diocesan team. Their words were heartfelt—they were deeply encouraged and eager for the next stage of Spirit-led discipleship training the following week.



The Archbishop also specifically mentioned his desire for a female team to return to empower the Mother's Union delegates in healing and deliverance, as the women are strongly desiring empowerment!



Saying goodbye was emotional. Though the Solomon Islands test one's endurance—with their heat, power outages, and endless humidity—they also capture one's heart. The people's generosity, warmth, and hunger for the things of God left a lasting impression on us all.

As the team departed in different directions, we carried with us not just memories of ministry and friendship, but a renewed sense of what it means to serve together in Christ's love—across cultures, nations, and oceans.