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Dear Friends,

What a week! It's Saturday morning, we can catch our breath! Canoes and boats have just departed transporting almost all of the pastors who attended the annual PIM seminar. Last year, only 25 pastors showed up but this year surpassed our expectations with a record number of participants—86! More bags of rice and other foods were hurriedly ordered so there was more than enough to eat. However, publications and other handouts were a bit more challenging with only 50 anticipated attendees. All the Bibles, concordances and commentaries in English were quickly exhausted. Other Bibles in Melanesian Pidgin replaced well-used and tattered copies which some pastors have been using for years. Some forty pair of reading glasses did not meet the demand.

At one of the houses, a group of pastors often started praying as early as 4:30 am in unison for over 40 minutes. Then the singing would start. By first light at 6:00am things quieted down. Group devotions started at 7:00. Official classes began at 8:00 am and continued through 8:45 pm. Rev. Eric Schering, Ray Wangibi, David Kasen, and I (Douglas) were the main speakers.

A pastor working in a village or remote hamlet has not chosen this calling for financial gain. Offerings are always small. Some pastors who try to invest in other income streams are frequently criticized by church members. It is essential for a pastor and his wife to garden and fish to survive, however finding enough money to send their children to high school is hard. Despite these difficulties many have remained faithful in their ministry.

It was a joy to see the smiles and the friendship expressed when many of the pastors met each other again. One of the pastors recited the verses from the Psalm 133:1 -2, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!" These verses became visibly evident to me this week! It's your gifts that allow us to continue to serve in this way. Thank you!

Douglas Heidema