

# soma australia

## *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

Our journey from Sydney to Honiara began in the early hours, with a 5:15 a.m. bus and the small surprise of needing yet another bus to transfer between terminals in Brisbane. Nevertheless, spirits were high as the SOMA Australia team gathered at the gate for prayer and a quick photo before departure.



The team comprised Rev Brett Watterson, his wife Michelle, their daughter Amy and her husband Henry (a proud Solomon Islander), and their daughter Ysabel. Brett's other daughters, Liz and Lilli, also joined the mission, alongside Rev Graeme and Mrs Susan Liersch, Chair and Secretary of the SOMA Australia Board.

Stepping off the plane in Honiara, we were greeted by the heavy tropical humidity and the humbling reality of life in a developing nation. Within moments, the warm air made its presence known—an enduring companion for the week ahead.

We were warmly welcomed by Henry's family and local church members, who escorted us to **Chester House**, the Anglican guest house that became our home base. Before we could even settle in, we were ushered into the common



area, where a group of about twenty men greeted us in song. Their harmonies were rich and powerful, filling the room with a sense of reverence and joy.

A lavish spread soon followed—buns, scones, rice, chicken wings, toasted tuna sandwiches, and platters of tropical fruit. Eager not to offend, we tucked in enthusiastically, assuming this was dinner. Not so! Moments later, we were informed that another meal awaited us—a formal welcome dinner at Honiara Hotel.

The hotel, still proudly displaying a banner from the Duke and Duchess of York's visit years ago, provided a colourful introduction to local hospitality. My vegetarian pizza arrived so laden with cheese that I briefly wondered whether any vegetables had survived beneath the layer of melted mozzarella.

Chester House offered modest but comfortable accommodation – and an upstairs veranda which offered a cool breeze.



The air conditioner and ceiling fan were also greatly appreciated—at least until 3 a.m., when the power went out and we were reminded, rather abruptly, that we were indeed in the tropics. Cold showers, however, proved wonderfully refreshing and soon became a daily ritual.

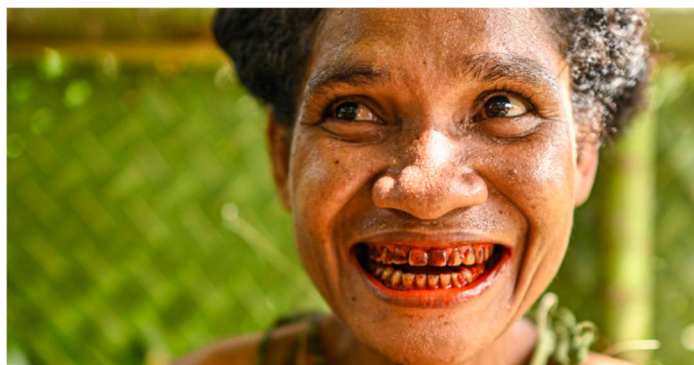
#### **Tuesday, 30th September – First Impressions**



Our first full day began with morning prayer, followed by a visit to the war memorial and a short shopping trip for supplies. The streets of Honiara were lively and full of character—dusty roads lined with roadside stalls and smiling faces.

One feature of the local culture quickly caught our attention: the prevalence of **betelnut**, a small lime-sized fruit chewed with ground coral and lime powder. Despite being technically illegal in Honiara, it is sold everywhere and widely used. The red-stained smiles of those who chew it constantly were at first startling, but soon became a familiar part of the city's charm. Betelnut is highly addictive and deeply ingrained in the social fabric, often shared in times of conversation and fellowship.

That evening, to our great relief, the power stayed on and we all enjoyed a full night's sleep.



#### **Wednesday, 1st October – Building Relationships**

After another invigorating cold shower, we travelled to the diocesan office for a meeting with the Archbishop of Melanesia and his bishops. Their warmth and openness were immediately evident. They spoke candidly about the ongoing tension between traditional spiritual practices—such as ancestral worship and witchcraft—and Christian teaching. Their request was clear: to receive biblical and Anglican guidance on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, healing, and deliverance.





We then visited the Cathedral, where our clergy conference would take place.



Together we assembled fifty conference packs containing notebooks, handouts, and SOMA pens, along with beautiful handmade crosses crafted by the Watterson family.

The presence of three ordained women on the team was something of a novelty for the clergy of Melanesia, where women are not currently permitted to be ordained. Despite this, both the Archbishop and the bishops extended genuine hospitality and grace, listening attentively as we shared.





Later that day, we visited the **Mother's Union headquarters**, presenting a gift from the Mothers' Union at Southlakes Anglican. The small sewing room, home to a few well-loved machines, is used to teach young women valuable skills. Michelle and I could immediately see how additional machines would bless their ministry. Later the Mother's Union President, Sandra and Regional Leader, Millie, dropped in and expressed how important it was for the women to be empowered across Melanesia.

That evening we joined Henry's home community for a youth rally—an exuberant celebration of song, games, prayer, and a shared meal under the night sky.



#### Thursday, 2nd October – The Conference Begins



As the clergy gathered for the opening session, their initial reserve soon gave way to openness and enthusiasm. Rev Brett began by teaching on ministering in the power of the Spirit and the importance of wearing the armour of God. Graeme and Susan followed with a session on biblical foundations for healing, and Michelle led a deeply moving teaching on forgiveness. During discussion time, the Dean of the Cathedral posed a question that resonated deeply: “How can we prevent what is happening in Australia—declining congregations and an ageing church—from happening here in the Solomon Islands?” The question sparked a rich conversation about faith, community, and mission in our respective contexts.





In the afternoon, I shared a session titled “*Deliver Us from Evil and from Muddying Lies*”, drawing on the imagery of deliverance, used by Charles Kraft, as a cleansing process—removing the “rubbish” of sin, unforgiveness, and woundedness that attracts spiritual oppression. The clergy responded with remarkable receptivity, eager to understand how such ministry could be practiced biblically within their Anglican tradition.

### Friday, 3rd October – Freedom and Healing

Day Two began with Morning Prayer, followed by Brett’s teaching on perseverance in ministry. Graeme and Susan then modelled a practical approach to praying for healing, offering structure and safety for ministry that was deeply appreciated.

In the afternoon, I led a session on *Freedom from Spiritual Oppression*, which prompted lively discussion—especially after one retired clergyman (who was actually not invited), representing more traditional views, challenged us to explain how deliverance ministry could be contextualised within island culture. What could have been a tense exchange instead became one of the most constructive dialogues of the entire week.

### Saturday, 4th October – Rest and Celebration

Saturday offered a welcome opportunity for rest and local exploration. The Honiara markets were a feast for the senses, filled with handcrafted jewellery, woven bags, and wooden carvings. A small café serving iced coffee and chocolate was a most welcome discovery.



That evening we joined Henry’s village again for his daughter’s baptism—a joyful occasion marked by worship, laughter, and an impressive feast, complete with freshly caught crab and what must surely have been the largest chocolate cake in the South Pacific.

### Sunday, 5th October – Worship and Laughter

On Sunday, Rev Michelle, Susan, and I were invited to celebrate Eucharist at the **Christian Care Centre**, a safe haven for women and children escaping violence. Hidden among palm trees by the shore, the centre is both sanctuary and refuge.

Our service followed the Melanesian Prayer Book and was conducted in a spirit of deep joy.



However, there was one memorable moment when Michelle began the “Holy, Holy, Holy” section of the liturgy to the melody of the well-known hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty.” Keen to support, I joined in—only to discover that the words didn’t quite fit the tune! Our voices eventually faded into muffled giggles, and even the sisters joined in good humour. They later described our service as “different”—a gracious and accurate description.



Afterward, we visited *Amazing Grace*, a local café and chocolate maker. Each of us purchased a bar of her homemade chocolate, beautifully packaged in hessian bags. Later that afternoon, back on the veranda at Chester House, we discovered it was 100% cacao—with no sugar at all. It was, shall we say, *an acquired taste*.

Our final evening was spent at the Coral Sands resort, enjoying a refreshing swim and a celebratory meal of fish and chips, hamburgers, and iced chocolate.

#### **Monday, 6th October – Farewell and Reflection**

Our final morning began with prayer and reflection as each team member shared highlights, challenges, and learnings from the week. When we met once more with the Archbishop and diocesan leaders, their gratitude was heartfelt. They expressed a strong desire to continue receiving teaching on Spirit-led discipleship, which Brett, Henry, and Amy will help facilitate in future visits.

The Archbishop also specifically asked for us to return to empower the women of Melanesia with the same teaching on healing as the clergy had received.

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.