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God's
Word is
reaching isolated
people groups
around the world,
and Ethnos360 Aviation
is there to help.

LET THE FLYING BEGIN!

On April 19, 2022, the first ever R66 helicopter in Papua New Guinea began service. Flying into the swampy region where the Iski people live, Ethnos360 Aviation pilot Josh Verdonck, accompanied by check pilot Brian Pruett, carried two of the missionaries who had planted the Iski church several years ago. Just a few hours later, they shuttled more missionaries — this time, *mature Iski believers* taking the gospel to an unreached Iski village!

The Kuyu team faces some long hard years ahead to teach the gospel clearly. As team member Michael LeBlanc says, “[The Kuyu] have heard stories of God. However, it’s via secondhand stories that are lost in oral tradition and distorted by their own worldview. The confusion has trapped them into rituals mixed with animism that couldn’t be more opposite from the Gospel.”



Josh greets villagers on the first ever flight into the Kuyu people group. photo by Brian Pruett



The R66 drops off the Kuyu team for meetings with the villagers. photo by Jacob Devalve

Does it get any better than that? Well, maybe it did on the next day. “One of the more exciting things we did,” wrote Josh, “was to check out the helipad of a people group that has been asking for missionaries for years.” Seven years!

After Josh verified that the landing zone would work, he flew a team into Kuyu for meetings, to make certain that the people wanted them to come and would give them land to build on. The Kuyu are in total agreement with the team coming.

As one village leader said, “For years now we have carried letters to the neighboring people group, and now you guys have finally heard our cries and pleas!”

Now the team has an open invitation to teach the truth. **“It is an incredible privilege and worth everything we have left behind,”** says Michael.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Do you have training as a pilot? As a mechanic? As an aviation support worker? Do you have a heart to reach isolated people groups waiting to hear what God has to say to them?

Contact personnel-aviation@ntm.org. We may have a place just for you! Like Michael, you’ll find it worth everything you leave behind.

THINGS THAT DON'T GO WELL WITH FLYING – AND THE THING THAT DOES

Rain, low clouds, poor visibility, high winds and mountains — things that don't mix with flying in a small helicopter. Ethnos360 Aviation pilot Brian Schaadt faced all of these in the one-week window he had available to do flights on a neighboring island in the Philippines. His docket was full, from the mundane (a missionary's dental crown had fallen off) to the sublime (flying indigenous missionaries to an outreach village where they themselves are taking the gospel) and a few other flights in between.

Facing tough weather, Brian put out the call for prayer. Maybe you were one who prayed! And God worked!

The next day, Brian reported, “The weather never really got ‘good,’ but it was good enough to take a very long way” to get passengers from the village to the dentist.

Then, seeing the weather predicted for the following day, Brian called for more prayer, very specific this time: to fly a translator to a village, to fly translated materials to indigenous believers, and to fly some other indigenous believers to an outreach that would otherwise take eight hours of treacherous hiking.

People around the world prayed again. As he began his flight the next morning, Brian said, “The farther we went, the worse it looked. But the Lord cleared the way over each ridge until we were finally over our destination village ... and [then] the Lord made a way over each ridge until we arrived home.”

Brian requested more prayer for the specific flights for the final day. Once again, God worked His will. Rain delayed his departure for three hours, but he accomplished the flight and landed back home in a rain shower.

Brian had one regret. He hadn't been able to fly the indigenous believers to their outreach location. But

God wasn't done! And probably people weren't done praying either. Fifteen minutes after Brian landed, “the weather turned nice. Really nice! So, I loaded up the supplies destined for their village and transported



A veteran missionary made a brief visit of encouragement to this people group before he left for furlough. photo by Brian Schaadt



These indigenous missionaries were delighted that God opened the way for Brian (left) to make their flight! photo by Brian Schaadt

them to their ministry location. The weather was great the whole time, as if it wasn't even rainy season anymore.”

Brian summed it up: “I have learned not to underestimate God.” God works through the prayers of His people, and you can fill a vital role on the prayer team as pilots face things that don't go well with flying. And as Brian says, “flying and praying go well together.”

BEING LIKE JESUS

Jesus came right into the messiness of life where we live. It didn't make it easy for Him, but that's the way He chose to reach us. Similarly, when believers sign on to go tell an unreached people group the story of Jesus – His miraculous birth, sinless life, atoning death, mighty resurrection and coming again – they also go right into the messiness of life where the people live.

Ethnos360 Aviation tries to make it easier – at least to get the team in there, keep them supplied, and be ready for emergencies. But when the helicopter drops the team members off in that remote location, the “easiness” ends. Rachel Mueller, part of the team reaching the Maliyali people of Papua New Guinea, recently opened a little window into the life she lives among that people group:



“Last night I hiked down to spend the night at my friend Lusimet’s house! It’s always quite the adventure spending the night with my Maliyali friends. To be honest, I have to preach to myself before I go, because it is always a very long and uncomfortable night. I’m not getting any younger, and the floors are hard on my hips! Not to mention the cockroaches and rats (hence the headband. I always make it a point to wear a headband like this to keep bugs out of my ears!) “So even though I don’t get much sleep at all, I feel it is so worth it. It shows my friends that I love them and want to spend time with them, and it allows me to be a part of their life at night, which I don’t normally do. Talking in the Maliyali language for literally hours, cooking sweet potatoes on the fire for dinner and breakfast, and just experiencing life with them is so sweet.”



This kind of deep interaction with the people has allowed the three families working in Maliyali to learn language and culture to the point of translating Scripture and preparing foundational Bible lessons.

Soon they’ll start teaching. But it’s really only the beginning of the process of establishing a thriving group of believers. Many more years of work and interaction lie ahead.

By God’s grace, Ethnos360 Aviation will be there to “ease” the load and sustain the team. God has already provided the first two R66 helicopters — the first already serving in PNG and the second one on order — to ensure uninterrupted service to the Maliyali team and about 14 other church planting teams who depend solely on the helicopter for transportation and supplies. A third R66 will complete the fleet. **You can be a part! Go to ethnos360aviation.org** “Give” tab and choose “3 Helicopters for PNG.”



A (NOT SO) QUICK ERRAND

Don't you just love it when you hop in the car, drive down the road five or ten minutes, do your errand, and get back home with lots of day left for other tasks? For missionaries, that sometimes involves a quick trip in an airplane.



Pilot Jamin Peck on an early morning flight.



Last year, Payton and Grace Downing were thrilled at the ease of using the Kodiak to get baby Evelyn's required visa work done. They left Taliabo, Asia-Pacific, flew to the city, got Evie's photo, fingerprints and Grace's signature in less than 10 minutes and even bought some fresh produce. "We arrived back in Taliabo just after lunch, only a little worse for wear."

This year was quite a different scenario: The Kodiak was down for work on the propeller, so the journey would have to be by land and sea and commercial airline. "Let's just say it's a little bit longer of a trip," quips Grace.

First – get to the coast. The Downings and their friends jumped on four motorbikes and for the next hour slipped and slid over muddy roads and even forded rivers. Except for Grace. At times, she had to walk, carrying Evelyn through some of the huge and squishy puddles because the bike was sinking too low in the mud. "I even took my sandals off to get better traction," she recalls.

Then came the river. Once again, Grace carried Evie across, sparing them the bumpy ride and keeping the cycle from sinking in the mud.

That was the first hour. Then it was a three-hour wait for the "cruise ship." At least that's what Payton told Grace it would be!

In pouring rain, they climbed into a canoe with their kids and cargo and were rowed out to board the small seagoing vessel. They thankfully had a teeny room on an upper level for the twelve-hour "cruise." At 5:30 a.m., they disembarked — bringing the travel time so far to 18 hours and 30 minutes. After a day of rest, they caught a commercial flight to the immigration office. In the end, says Grace, "It took 51 hours just to make it to immigration and that was only one way!"

Her conclusion? "The plane is not just for supplies and transportation. It is a ministry tool to keep us on the job of learning language. Any time we are in transit, we are away from ... the ministry with the people. We're so thankful for the flight program."

(All photos by Grace Downing)

BREAKING NEWS!

The R66 for Brazil will soon be on its way! A commercial importation company has been contracted to handle all the paperwork, including flying the R66 from Arizona to Brazil. Praise God for this answer to prayer – and pray with us for a safe flight.

PRAISE God for the R66 helicopter on order for Asia-Pacific, due to arrive in Arizona this fall. Pray that God will clear all the complications of getting it to Asia-Pacific. Ask God for His favor and His perfect timing.