

## **FORMER IFM & MEF MEMBERS ATTEND SYCAMORE TREE COUNSELING SESSION IN MALAITA**

### **Maluu**

A Sycamore Tree Ministry of the Prison Fellowship Solomon Islands counselling session for former warring factions kicked off on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at Zion local church in Maluu of north Malaita.



*Former IFM & MEF warring combatants at front of the Zion Local Church at Maluu in North Malaita.*

The unique thing about this particular session is that eight former members of the Isatabu Freedom Movement and the Malaita Eagle Force were in attendance. The Isatabu freedom Movement representation is led by the likes of Joseph Sangu, Patrick Tuna, Charles Vangere, Jeffery Kala, Earnest Francis, Jerold Kikolo, Greg Semana and Chief Matthew Qaro.

The representative of the Isatabu freedom movement travelled from Guadalcanal via Honiara on the 360 Discovery and met by the former MEF men at Auki on Malaita when both IFM and MEF men travelled together by pickup truck on a rough and tedious drive to Maluu where both parties are warmly welcomed by former members of the MEF around Maluu and Pastor Penuel Idusulia of Zion local church and the community.

At the welcome ceremony, one of the former Malaita Eagle force members better known as “Kernal” admitted to Joe Sangu that during the ethnic crisis, he had Joe Sangu and Harold Kekes name written on two packets of ammunition that he reserved for no one else but Joe and Harold. “Today I thank God for blessing me with the opportunity to stand before you and confess the truth about what hatred the devil can deceive us with. I welcome you and our fellow brothers from Guadalcanal to our communities in North Malaita and ask you to please forgive me for harbouring such evil thoughts in my heart for you and brother Harold.” In response Joe said “Kernal, you and I are sinners, we must continue to appreciate Gods unfailing love. God forgive us so I must give you my forgiveness”.



*Joe Sangu with Kernal who had Joe's name written on his ammunition box.*

He further expressed his sincere gratitude for the warm reception him and his boys were given and said that he felt that Maluu is already home away from home.

Former MEF representatives include Brown Abeta, James Kili, Noxy Atu, Moses Ako, Iro Longkona plus Hardy Saeni and others.

At night an open air crusade was effected at the Maluu primary school field where pastor Sakiusa preached moving sermons.

The former IFM members were also given the opportunity to confess to the people of North Malaita that they were responsible for some of the pain and agony experience over the ethnic tension period and are deeply sorry for what happened then. Joe assured the people of North Malaita that neither him nor his men will return to such evil regime again.

A chupu/Fonoe was also effected at Zion local church to demonstrate both parties willingness to engage in the process in mending relationships that were broken.

As the final session draws to it end an old men of around 70 years walked into the church building and bowed asked if he could be heard. Pastor Seru stopped in the middle of his presentation to allow for the old guy to say his piece. The old men resting on the walking stick in his right hand to support his frail weight. Stood still for a moment then began with a soft crackle voice, and this is what he said. "I heard that some former Guadalcanal militant men are here". When he was assured that there are former Guadalcanal militant men in the church building, he went on to say; "My son was taken from his work place at Tasahe and killed by Guadalcanal militants at the height of the ethnic tension". He then moved to the front where Pastor Seru was standing, turned around very slowly and said, "I come to give you Guadalcanal men who represent those who killed my son my forgiveness" Joseph Sangu and the former IFM representatives appeared hesitant in identifying themselves to the old men. The old men continued and said, "I want to give you my forgiveness to relief myself of the bitterness that lingers in my heart towards those that kill my son. Further, I am giving my forgiveness to set those responsible free so that they can be free from the curse that follows them as a result of my unforgiveness"

Joe and the former IFM men walk up to the old men joined hands with the old men and acknowledge the crime committed and also make a symbolic restitution to the old men.

That very simple and heart touching sentiments and action exhibited by the old men touched everyone in the church that everyone shed tears.

The old men that walked into the church that day is Silas Funubana of Maluu in North Malaita.



*Pastor Skiusa Nasici prayed over old man Silas Funubana and former IFM men*

The next counselling sessions for former warring factions will be effected at Auki from the 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

Accompanying Pastor Seru and the Sycamore Tree Ministry team is another Fijian, Pastor Sakiusa Nasici of the Christian Missionary Fellowship who speaks at the night crusades at Maluu.

It is the Sycamore Tree Ministry's belief that all glory must be given back to the one true peace maker, who cleans us of all our sins, one who forgive us and one who gives true reconciliation. The living God Almighty.

## **Auki**

The team returned to Auki on Friday morning and were accommodated at the SSEC transit. The Auki sessions got underway on Saturday morning in the Auki Correctional Centre, thanks to the genuineness exhibited by the management of the Auki Correctional Centre.



*Former IFM, MEF members, prisoner officers and Sycamore Tree Facilitators at Auki Correctional Centre*

The session is organised for former MEF men who can make it to the venue from east, west and south of Auki.

On Sunday all the former warring factions members attended church with local churches around Auki and were invited for lunch by family members of those local churches.

At the Sunday night crusade, a chupu (*Guadalcanal*) or fonoa (*Malaita*) was effected. This is not a reconciliation ceremony. The ceremony symbolises the physical evidence of spiritual commitment by former warring factions to pave the way for the negotiation process to be facilitated towards a national reconciliation. The ceremony was witnessed by the Premier of Malaita province Hon. Miniti Suibaea who continued to pledge Malaita province to support the peace process.



*A former IFM exchange shell money with a former Malaitan combatant*

## **Church**

The collaborative approach by all churches in Auki signifies the unity that all stakeholders must employ in order to reach a meaningful reconciliation that brings nation healing.



*Pastor Titus Luther delivering the word on Saturday night at the crusade*

The three nights crusades featured Pastor Titus Luther of the Four Square church, Pastor Sakiusa Nasici of the Christian Missionary Fellowship and Pastor David Filo of the Seventh Day Adventist who belted a message that concludes the three sessions. That real and lasting peace originates from God the creator and is demonstrated by Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary for all human who acknowledge and accepts the truth.

Facilitating the counselling sessions is the coordinator of the Sycamore Tree Ministry, Pastor Seru who is of the humble opinion that these sessions must be kept in continuity until all affected individuals and communities are reached.

The vice chairman of the Prison Fellowship Solomon Islands, Simon Mannie who accompany the team wish to convey the PFSI sincere gratitude to those that assist one way or the other in making the trip a success. The statement cannot be concluded without mentioning the likes of the Hon. Premier of Guadalcanal province for the overwhelming support and standing behind the IFM men to join the team, GPPOL, GRML, Dalgro, Terminal Services, The bible Way Church, the SIFGA churches for supporting financially, the Zion local church and Loina SSEC church in Maluu, the Chairman and members of the PF committee at Auki, the Commandant of Auki Correction Centre and the church communities in Maluu and Auki. A special one goes to Eddie for a wonderful job well done in organising the crusades. Finally, thank you Pastor Sakiusa, Pastor Titus, Pastor David and Pastor Seru for what you see in us.