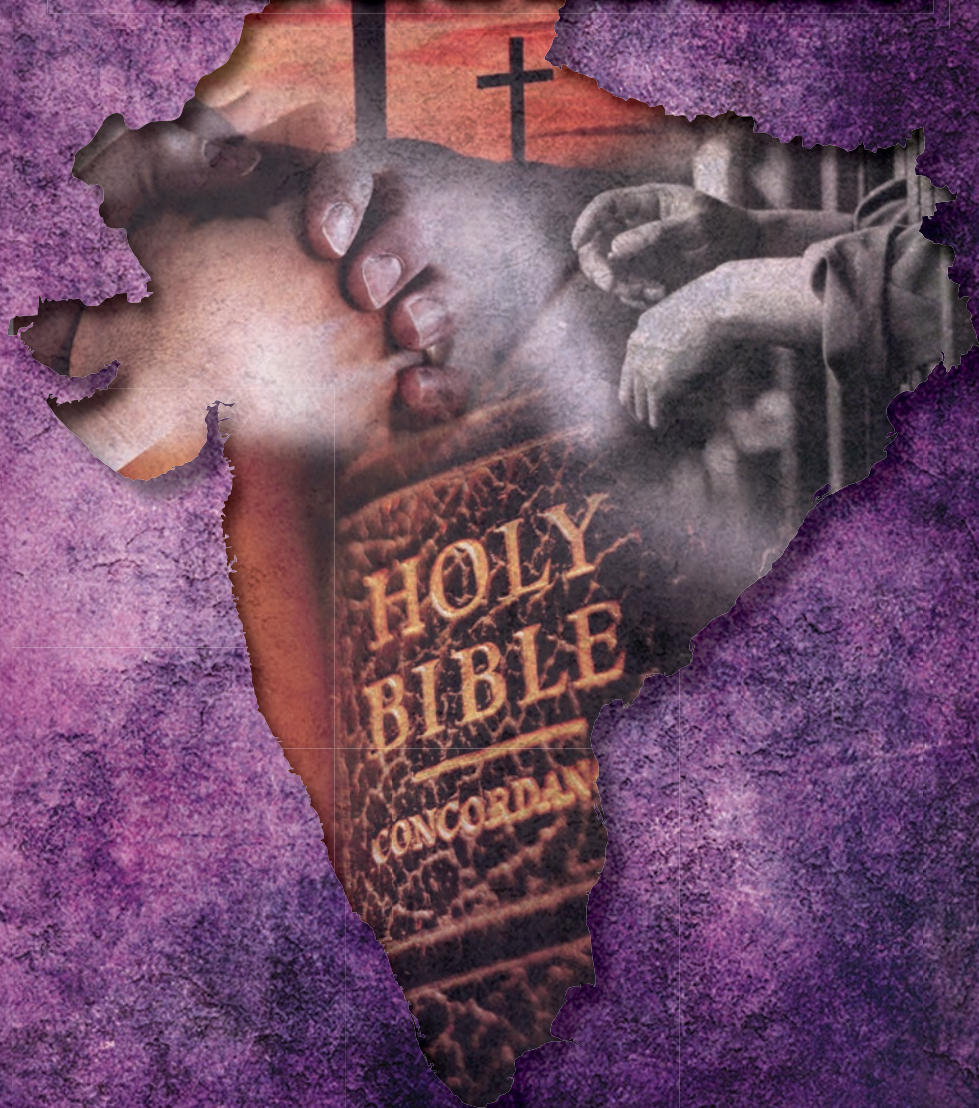


OUR MAN IN THE MARSHALLS



OUR MAN IN THE MARSHALLS

Yohanes Arwakon, Enid, Oklahoma, and the
Mission to Enhance Pacific Islanders Quality of Life



Yohanes Arwakon

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***Majuro, Capital of the Republic
of the Marshall Islands (RMI)***

Pacific Islanders in Enid, Oklahoma



The Marshall Islands is composed of 29 atolls and 5 islands covering 2,780 square miles of ocean

Thousands of Pacific Islanders have settled in Enid, Oklahoma, since the mid-1970s.

These Pacific Islanders, who include Indonesians, Filipinos, Chuukese, Hawaiians, and Marshallese all call Enid their new home.

It's difficult to estimate how many Pacific Island people live in Garfield County, where Enid serves as the county seat of government, but most estimates range between 5,000 to 10,000 Pacific Islanders.

The clear majority of these Pacific Islanders come from the Marshall Islands.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is a nation of more than 50,000 people living on 29 coral atolls and five small low-lying islands in the central Pacific, midway between Hawaii and Australia.

The 2020 United States Census will undoubtedly show a large percentage increase in Marshallese population in Enid when compared to the 2010 Census.

From 2000 to 2010, the white population in Garfield County fell from 51,253 to 48,744, a reduction of nearly 5%. However, during that same ten-year period, the population of Garfield County increased from 57,813 to 60,580. The Hispanic and Latino population increased by over 100% (from 2,387 to 5,353), and the Pacific Islander population in Garfield County increased by 400%.

A similar percentage increase from 2010 to 2020, which many expect to see, would place the Pacific Islander population at almost 5,000 in Garfield County by 2020, with well over 3,000 of these Pacific Islanders coming from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.



Marshallese Independence Day, May 1
Volleyball Game

Many expect the number of Marshallese in Enid to exceed 5,000 within the next decade for three reasons:

1. The flat, low-lying Marshall Islands are disappearing because the ocean level is rising.
2. The United States government requires no visas for Marshallese people to enter the U.S.
3. The Marshallese go where they know people, and the Marshallese are already in Enid. There are three cities in the United States where the Marshallese have come to live - Springfield, Arkansas; Portland, Oregon; and Enid, Oklahoma.

Enid, Oklahoma has the largest percentage of Marshallese people of any city in the nation. The Marshallese come into the United States without needing a Visa. They are the only ethnic group in the world with this privilege.

Here's why.

U.S. Atomic Bombing of the Marshall Islands



A U.S. test of the Baker Bomb in 1946.

The United States has an eventful history with the Marshall Islands that began after World War II. The U.S. military used the islands for the testing of American nuclear weapons. A civilian-run base still operates there as part of the United States missile-defense system.

The United States government detonated a total of 67 nuclear and thermo-nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958. The United States unsuccessfully attempted to shield the Marshallese people from the resulting nuclear fallout. Many of the Marshallese natives contracted severe long-term health problems due to their exposure to radioactive fallout. Many lagoons and the Marshallese favorite fishing areas experienced radioactive contamination and will remain contaminated for thousands of years.

United States nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands started in 1946 when the United States Navy evacuated 167 Bikini Islanders to Rongerik Atoll to make way for Bikini Atoll as the location for the first post-World

War II testing of nuclear weapons. The excitement and stir that came to the American public as a result of the military's nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll gave rise to the name of a new two-piece swimsuit created in 1946. The swimsuit's designer called his new sensation "the bikini."

From 1946 to 1958, the U.S. military moved the Marshallese people from atoll to atoll. Often, the Marshallese people were left on previously uninhabited islands to fend for themselves. Soon the Marshallese began suffering from starvation. The United States government did little to relieve the distress.

The United States government detonated the first hydrogen bomb, Castle Bravo, on Bikini Atoll, March 1, 1954. It was 1,000 times stronger than the Hiroshima bomb in 1945.

Within hours of Castle Bravo's detonation, the Marshallese people on Rongelap and Ailinginae Atolls found themselves enveloped in the gritty, white ash of radioactive fallout. The people of the Marshall Islands had their homeland and health sacrificed for the national security interests of the United States at the beginning of America's "Cold War" with the Soviet Union.



Early fusion of Castle Bravo on Bikini Island

The Marshallese Free to Enter the U.S.



The United States and the Marshall Islands share a unique relationship through the Compact of Free Association (COFA), which was established in 1983, just three years before the Marshall Islands achieved independence as the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The COFA is an agreement that stems from the United States' use of the Marshall Islands for nuclear testing.

The COFA allows the United States to operate armed forces on the Marshall Islands, to demand land for operating bases, and excludes the militaries of other countries without U.S. permission. The United States, in turn, is responsible for protecting the Republic of the Marshall Islands and administering all international defense treaties and affairs. The U.S. may not declare war on RMI's behalf. The United States is allowed to store nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands to defend against an actual or impending attack on the United States or the Marshall Islands. Citizens of the Marshall Islands may serve in the United States military. Also, the

United States allows the Marshallese people to enter the United States without a visa. The Marshallese may work in the United States and pay taxes to the United States government. However, in 1996 the United States Congress removed Medicaid benefits from the Marshall Island people.



Poverty Abounds Among the People of the Marshalls

The Problems the Marshallese Face in Enid



Yohanes Arwakon and his wife, Yenni, at the 2017 Marshallese Thanksgiving Dinner in Enid, Oklahoma

The Marshallese people mostly find employment opportunities at Walmart and AdvancePierre Foods, which is owned by Tyson Foods, based in Springdale, Arkansas. Though able to find employment, it is often difficult for the Marshallese people to adapt to the American way of life.

In the Marshall Islands, the culture is laid-back. Island time is different from American time. It is often a struggle for the Marshallese to adapt to United States traffic, being on time for work, paying bills on time, and other American customs not seen in their home country. Some of the biggest struggles in assimilating to American culture revolve around health care and education.

Terry Mote, a Marshallese who works as a contract translator at Garfield County Health Department, understands the struggle. He told an Enid News and Eagle reporter in May 2017 that “Whenever the Marshallese are sick, they don’t come to the health department. Whenever they’re sick,

they visit the big hospital and (receive) big bills.” The older Marshallese in Enid often cannot speak English. Many teachers in the Enid Public School system have expressed frustration with the inability to communicate with the parents of their Marshallese students. The Marshallese are moving to America for better educational and economic opportunities for their families, but they are finding it difficult to assimilate. The Marshallese churches in Enid focus on maintaining the culture and customs of the Marshall Islands, offering little help for the Marshallese people to adapt to American culture.

Istoia Ministries has a vision and a heart to serve the Marshallese people through programs and ministry that will allow them to assimilate into the American culture and way of life for the good of their families.



Marshallese in Wade Burleson's Office



Marshallese Children's Christmas in Enid

Yohanes Arwakon, Pastor to Enid's Pacific Islanders



Yohanes and Yenni Arwakon in their home country of Indonesia

The East Java villagers of the Pacific Islands called him “the devil child.” His mom had gone to local witch doctors for blood rituals. She had given birth to three girls, but no boy. After the sixth witchdoctor performed a unique fertility blood rite, she became pregnant. The boy was born on March 31, 1979. They named him Yohanes.

The boy’s first memories were nights spent tied to a tree in front of the family home. His father refused to let him sleep in the family house “lest the devil enter.”

The villagers, afraid of the boy, told his traditional tribal parents that they would either have to sacrifice a daughter to the gods to break the curse or give the boy away.

The boy’s parents chose the latter option.

When the boy was five, an auntie who lived far away came to the boy’s village to take him away. He still remembers the image of his mother in a yellow dress, crying on the porch as her little boy stretched out his hands,

screaming to his momma, “No, momma. Please, don’t let me go.” His father stood on the porch with his arms crossed.

The boy would never return to his parents’ home. He’d see his mother only once more, shortly before her death.

That’s how life began for Yohanes Arwakon, Emmanuel Enid’s Pastor to Pacific Islanders.

But the painful memories became the seeds for God’s purpose in Yohanes’ life.



Native tribal people of Papua

The auntie who took Yohanes as her own was the only Christian in Yohanes’ extended family. She and her native Papuan husband had been unable to bear children. So, they adopted Yohanes and gave him their last name, Arwakon.

It was under their influence that Yohanes Arwakon received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior as a young boy in the swamplands of Papua. Yohanes Arwakon’s adoptive parents were Christian missionaries to the cannibal tribes of Papua, Indonesia.

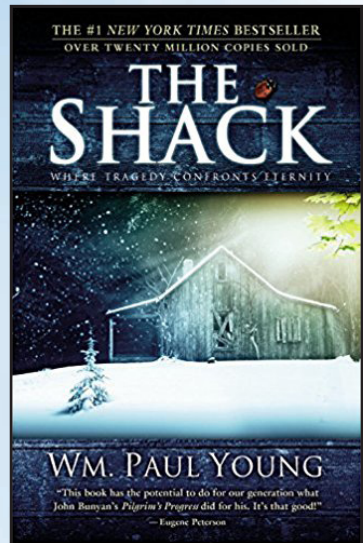
Yohanes' Training in Community Development

Yohanes' adoptive parents worked among the Asmat tribe of Papua in the early 1960s. Yohanes' adoptive father, Yunus Arwakon, was a fellow missionary with Don Richardson, author of *The Peace Child: An Unforgettable Story of Primitive Jungle*. Don worked among the Sawi tribe, while Yunus Arwakon worked among the Asmat people, the rival tribe to the Sawi.

In 1962, Michael Rockefeller, son of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, disappeared among the Asmat cannibal tribe of Papua. Missionaries serving alongside Don Richardson and Yunus Arwakon reported seeing "a white man" among the cannibal tribes of the swampland of Papua (e.g., the Sawi and the Asmat), but the mystery of what happened to Michael Rockefeller has never been solved.

Paul Young, a friend of Emmanuel Enid and author of #1 worldwide bestselling novel *The Shack*, also grew up in the highlands of Papua with his missionary parents during the early 1960s. The Arwakons served with the Youngs, the Richardsons, and were close friends with Finn Torjesen, the TEAM leader in Indonesia, and later China.

Yohanes grew to manhood among the tribes of Papua. His parents sacrificed financially to send him to the University of Manokwari. Growing up, Yohanes read many missionary biographies such as John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Newton, William Carey, David Livingstone, Martin Luther, Hudson Taylor in China, DL Moody, Polycarpus a martyr in Rome, Adoniram Judson, Robert Moffat, and Charles Spurgeon. He was deeply impressed with their life stories. Yohanes surrendered his life to



evangelical Christian missionary service.

But fulfilling his call from God to serve as a Christian missionary would have to wait for a few years. God sent Yohanes to be trained for his ultimate calling. He attended university and received his bachelor's degree in Community Planning.

After receiving his college degree, Yohanes Arwakon went to work for the large American company Freeport-McMoran in their Indonesian division. Yohanes worked as the Deputy of the Executive Secretary for the Seven-Tribes Economic Bureau of LPMK. His high-level position in Freeport-McMoran involved oversight of a billion-dollar endowment to assist in Community Planning among some of the same Papua tribes with whom his father had ministered as a Christian missionary – the Amungme, Kamoro, Moni, Mee, Damal, Dani and Nduga.

Yohanes' job was to develop free medical clinics for the Papua tribes, expand the educational opportunities among tribal children and provide job opportunities and training for tribal adults. Yohanes oversaw the annual disbursements of the billion-dollar endowment that Freeport-McMoran established to *"improve the tribal communities"* around the world's largest mine, the Grassburg Mine. Yohanes was a successful businessman, recognized for his work around the world. The United States Department of State selected Yohanes in 2013 to attend the elite *International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP)*, a school which names David Cameron, Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela and a host of other world leaders as its graduates. Yohanes completed the school, which focused on community planning in 2013. Yohanes remains the only Indonesian ever chosen by the U.S. government to attend.

After working for 12 years as a community planner in the Pacific Islands at Papua, Yohanes Arwakon and his wife Yenni and their three boys



The Grassburg Mine in Indonesia

came to Enid, Oklahoma, and we interviewed him for the job of Pastor to Pacific Islanders. After hearing Yohanes' Christian testimony, receiving highest recommendations from his former bosses at Freeport-McMoran, and visiting with pastors and missionaries in Papua, our Leadership Team voted unanimously to license Yohanes as our Pastor to Pacific Islanders. Unlike Indonesian churches, our church in America recognizes gifted men and women as pastors, and empowers them to serve according to their giftedness.

I (Wade Burleson) believe that the word "pastor" is a verb of service and not a noun of status. The 5,000 Pacific Islanders in Enid are in need of professional community planning assistance. The United States government has abandoned the Marshallese when it comes to their medical care, the educational opportunities for their children and job training. Istoria Ministries believes that Yohanes Arwakon is the perfect man to help the Marshallese in Enid assimilate into American culture and to benefit from all that America has to offer.



At the house donated for
Pacific Island Ministry

Yohanes Arwakon's Ministry in Enid, Oklahoma



Yohanes and Yenni among the Marshallese in Enid

The United States Department of Homeland Security and the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) gave Emmanuel Enid approval in August 2017 for the Religious Worker (R-1) Visa which allows Yohanes to work among the Marshallese in Enid.

Yohanes Arwakon became the Community Development Pastor to Enid's Islanders in 2016.

Prior to approval from the United States government for Yohanes to draw a salary, Yohanes volunteered his time ministering to the Marshallese. Emmanuel received Homeland Security approval to employ Yohanes Arwakon as our Pastor to Pacific Islanders on August 1, 2017. From August 2017 to 2018, Yohanes worked at connecting social services in our



community for the assistance of the Marshallese. He headed up the English as a Second Language Program and has been heavily involved in Enid Public Schools, assisting our educators with the fast-growing population of Marshallese children. Emmanuel Enid and Yohanes were beginning to work with state government to apply for better health care for the Marshallese, and it was our goal to develop free medical clinics for the specific needs Marshallese people have.

Yohanes' work among the Marshallese ended abruptly on March 8, 2018, when the American Consulate in Jakarta, Indonesia, refused to issue a visa for Yohanes and Yenni to return to America. They'd gone to visit Yenni's ailing father, and when it came time to come back to Enid, the American Consulate said "No." The American Consulate stated Yohanes needed an E-4 PERMANENT Immigrant Visa, not an R-1 Temporary Immigrant Visa. Wade Burleson and Senator James Lankford's office (thank you Estella!) worked tirelessly to bring Yohanes back to America. Until he returned in early 2020, Yohanes lived in the Marshall Islands.



While awaiting approval from the U.S. government, Yohanes and Yennis and their three boys moved to the Marshall Islands with a vision of learning as much as possible before their return to Enid.

Yohannes
and Yenni
ministering
in Majuro



Our Man In the Marshalls



On April 19, 2018, Yohanes and Yenni Arwakon arrived for the first time in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. While in Majuro for the next 15-months, Yohanes and Yenni were employed as Enid's liasons to the people living in the South Pacific.

I began calling Yohanes, "Our Man in the Marshalls."

His time in the islands was a blessing from the LORD and we agree it proved to



Yohanes arriving in Majuro, Marshall Islands, April 19, 2018

be important for his future ministry to the Marshallese in Enid.

When Yohanes and Yenni and the three boys returned to Enid in the early spring of 2020, they understood even better all the challenges and problems the Marshallese people in Oklahoma face.

While in Majuro, Yohanes and Yenni Arwakon worked hard to accomplish five things:

1. They built relationships with RMI government officials.
2. They learned the Marshallese language and customs.
3. They built ministry relationships with relatives of Marshallese people in Enid.
4. They worked on developing a long-term Community Development Plan in Enid, Oklahoma
5. They made connections with evangelical native churches in the capital of Majuro

Why would God move a man and his family to the Marshall Islands to be better prepared to minister to the Marshallese people in Enid, Garfield County, and Oklahoma in general? For one reason:

“For when the Son of Man comes in glory He will say, ‘For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”
(Matthew 25:35-40)

When you give to the missions and ministry budget of Emmanuel Enid, you are directly supporting the Arwakon family in the Marshall Islands.

Godspeed, Yohanes Arwakon family! We look forward to welcoming you back to Enid soon.

What You Can Do to Support Enid's Pacific Islander Ministry and Yohanes & Yenni Arwakon

1. Pray for Yohanes, Yenni, and their boys: Jonathan, Paul and Noel.
2. Volunteer in our ongoing English as a Second Language ministry.
3. Give to the weekly ministry and missions budget of Emmanuel Enid.
4. Serve as a tutor in our Marshallese children's ministry.
5. Give to the designated Pacific Island Ministry missions account.
6. Check www.istoriaministries.com for updates on the ministry
7. Help us work on obtaining college partnerships to improve the ability of Marshallese young people to obtain a college education.



The Marshallese singing at
a local church in Enid, OK

