

Solomon Islands

South Pacific

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Geography - Solomons

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands in Melanesia includes six major islands, Choiseul, Santa Isabel and Malaita in the northern chain, and New Georgia, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal in the southern chain, along with 900 smaller islands, with an area of 29,000 km² and a population of about 700,000. Honiara, the capital, is on Guadalcanal, the largest island. The Santa Cruz Islands to the south are closer geographically and ecologically to Vanuatu.



Choiseul

Santa Isabel
Island

Gizo
Menakasapa
Munda

Batuna

Samasodu
Point
Buala

Auki
Malaita

Haliupai

**Solomon
Islands**

Ngorangora
San Cristobal

Lata

Apakhö

Nama
Numbuko

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands became a British Protectorate in 1893. There was fierce fighting between the US, the UK and Japan during the Solomon Islands campaign 1942-1945, including the battle of Guadalcanal. They became independent and part of the British Commonwealth in 1978. The islands have frequently suffered from ethnic tensions and internal conflict from political movements.



Honiara, Solomon Islands, 1975



Logging roads, Solomon Islands 1975



Plantation clearing, Solomon Islands 1975



Malaita, Solomon Islands



Village of Ridvan, Malaita, Solomon Islands



Malaita, Solomon Islands



Malaita, Solomon Islands



Malaita, Solomon Islands



Tabu House, Lau Lagoon, Malaita, Solomon Islands

Inside Tabu House
Lau Lagoon
Malaita
Solomon Islands



Alvin and Gertrude Blum

Gertrude Blum (1909-1993) and Alvin Blum (1912-1968) were Americans of Russian-Jewish background- Gertrude became a Bahá'í in 1930, tried to pioneer in 1939, settling in racist Birmingham, Alabama. Alvin became a Bahá'í in 1936. They met in 1941, but Alvin was stationed in New Zealand during World War II, which delayed their marriage until 1945. In 1947 they moved to New Zealand and bought a clothes manufacturing business. In 1951, Gertrude and her 5-year-old daughter Keithie made a travel-teaching trip to Fiji.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)



Gertrude
and
Alvin
Blum



Alvin J. Blum

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

When the Ten Year Crusade was announced, Alvin cabled the Guardian, who cabled back 'Advise virgin areas Pacific'. At the Intercontinental Teaching Conference in New Delhi, Alvin learned the Solomon Islands were difficult to enter, so he chose them as his pioneering goal. Alvin, Gertrude and seven-year-old Keithie sailed to the Solomon Islands and arrived in Honiara on 1 March 1954 with just a 2-month tourist visa. They were rowed ashore in a small dinghy, and left on the beach with their luggage and no taxi. A passing priest took them to the only hotel in town, an auto garage with several corrugated iron Quonset huts left by the American army.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

Keithie saw her first Solomon Islander: “a very dark woman working outside... She has enormous fuzzy hair as well as big hoopy rings through her ears and through her nose. Most amazing to me is that she is wearing no top.”

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

Alvin looked for work, and when the hotel manager quit, he was hired to take his place. The British Chief of Police had a thick folder on his desk with their name on it, and after several hours of their explaining both their intentions and the Faith, he reluctantly allowed them to stay to manage the hotel and extended their visas. Shoghi Effendi had told Alvin to set up a business, so he started with a taxi business for hotel customers.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

The Chief of Police managed to get Alvin fired as hotel manager in July and then demanded a £500 bond in order to be allowed to stay without a job. The National Spiritual Assembly of Persia, overseeing the islands, proved the funds. Difficulties with the authorities persisted until a New Zealand Bahá'í who knew the District Commissioner's father, sent a letter that quickly improved relations with the authorities.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

The Blums had been renting a house which the owner tried to force them to buy, but the now-friendly Commissioner took over the property for non-payment of taxes and offered the Blums a 99-year lease/purchase of 2.5 acres. Alvin started many businesses, including a bakery, an ice cream shop, laundry and dry cleaning business, a general store and a hotel.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

By early 1955, a local teacher and a newly arrived Australian were the first to accept the Faith in Honiara. The local teacher was surprised when Alvin shook his hand and invited him to their home, something no other white person in town had done before. The local clergy and police became concerned and attended all the meetings until they were convinced that the Bahá'ís presented no threat to public order. The clergy, however, publicly denounced the Bahá'ís.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

One night, Hamuel Hoahania, the chief of the area, came to the Blum's home. He had heard about the Faith from two workers in the Blum's bakery and wanted to know about it. We was impressed that the Blums invited him into their home for dinner, something few other white people did at that time. After accepting the Faith, Hamuel carried it to hundreds of islanders and was the key to large-scale enrolment. His enrolment resulted in the election of the first Local Spiritual Assembly at Ridvan 1957.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)



First Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Honiara, British Solomon Islands, April 1957.

First Local Spiritual Assembly, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Alvin and Gertrude Blum

In 1978, Hamuel was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Solomon Islands and was present at an election of the Universal House of Justice. Alvin Blum died in 1968, still at his pioneering post. Gertrude was honoured by Queen Elizabeth II in 1989 as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) and passed away in Honiara in 1993.

(based on Earl Redman, 2017, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 194-196)



National
Bahá'í
Convention

Solomon
Islands

2023