

the  
**Pierce Report**   
 A Newsletter from Jason and Devan Pierce

In this issue...

- Greetings** 1
- Coronavirus Update** 2
- BIR News** 3
- Our Students** 3
- Short Courses** 4
- Night Program** 4

**Greetings!**

Bula from Fiji! As the apostle, Paul, wrote, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7b) What a relevant greeting for our day and time. It is my prayer that God will bring you all peace in this time of turmoil. It is my hope that this newsletter will help brighten your day as you see that God’s work continues to be done even in the midst of the chaos of this world.

Our work in Fiji with the Bible Institute at Raiwaqa (BIR) continues to go strong. Like many of you, we have had some bumps and roadblocks along the way. But the Lord has blessed us, and we have been able to continue with our work in spite of the Coronavirus outbreak. In this newsletter, I look forward to sharing with you some of the challenges and changes that we have experienced over the last three months. As always, I want to thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and support. We could not do this work without you!



**2 TIMOTHY 2:2**  
 “...what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men.”



## Coronavirus Update

As I reported in our last newsletter, the Coronavirus struck Fiji in March. Truthfully, we have been very blessed in comparison to so many other countries in the world. To date, we have had only seventeen total cases of the virus and no deaths. At this time, there are no known active cases of the virus in Fiji.

However, in spite of this good news, the virus has still had a major impact upon Fiji. As I mentioned in my last letter, Suva was placed on a two-week lockdown. During that time, there was no travel into or out of Suva. We were given a mandatory curfew from 8:00 PM until 6:00 AM. All churches, schools, and assemblies were shut down - along with most businesses and restaurants. During that time, we were basically stuck at home. We were only allowed to worship in our own homes without any visitors.

At the end of that two weeks, the government began easing restrictions. The curfew was changed to 10:00 PM to 5:00 AM. We were allowed to again have assemblies of twenty people or fewer - which meant that our group could again begin meeting for worship in our home. Many businesses were allowed to reopen along with most restaurants - although they were on different hours due to the curfew. In some ways, daily life was able to return to normal. However, we still were not allowed to meet with the full assembly of the church, and the public schools remained closed.

That is how the situation has continued up until yesterday, when the government released new guidelines. These new guidelines will allow churches to resume meeting with numbers fewer than 100 (although we do not yet know what other restrictions, if any, will be placed on the churches - such as social distancing guidelines). The men of the Raiwaqa congregation plan to meet on Saturday to discuss a plan for resuming our worship services under the new guidelines. The government also announced that they will have all public schools open by July 6. The curfew was shortened to 11:00 PM to 4:00 AM (apparently, the curfew has helped reduced the crime rate at night).

The biggest challenge of the outbreak has been its impact upon the economy. Fiji's economy heavily depends upon tourism. Due to the global outbreak, nearly all resorts have been forced to close. This affects how much tax revenue comes into the country. It has also resulted in thousands of workers losing their jobs. Fiji's national airline (Fiji Airways) suddenly and without warning fired all of their employees (all pilots and crew) in May - costing nearly 800 people to lose their jobs. At this time, Fiji Airways has not announced any plans to reopen the airline. This will have a significant impact upon whether or not we will be able to come home for our scheduled reporting trip in November. Please keep us in your prayers!



## BIR News

The Coronavirus guidelines basically kept the school shut down for about a month. However, during that time, we were not idle. We were busy working on plans for reopening the school and continuing to train our students. After about a month, the government eased some of the restrictions on institutions of higher learning. While they encouraged schools to use online programs as much as possible, we were allowed to resume classes of fewer than twenty people at a time. Since we are a small school, this meant that we were allowed to have in-person classes. However, there were still concerns about finding childcare for some of our students.

In the end, we decided upon a plan to use pre-recorded videos to finish out our classes from the first term. We were able to do this in large part thanks to a private donation from a member of the Killen (AL) church of Christ. This donation had allowed the school to purchase several Samsung tablets. Dad and I were able to record videos and place them on the tablets for the students to watch. We then delivered the tablets along with the assignments to each of our students. At the end of the week, we swapped out the videos and gave them new assignments. This allowed us to ease back into the program.

On May 19, we were finally able to resume in-person classes. We have had to revise our schedule in order to allow our students to still be finished with the school year in time for graduation (October 31). We are now following a schedule with two classes being taught at a time (one morning and one afternoon). Each pair of courses run for two or three weeks. We have unfortunately had to cancel all of our planned evangelistic campaigns (due to both the lost time in the schedule and the continued travel and assembly restrictions). However, we have set time aside during our personal evangelism course for doing evangelistic outreach.

Since resuming classes, we have completed four courses. Rocco Pierce and Emosi Sailo co-taught a class on the book of Acts. Emosi Sailo taught a course on 1-2 Timothy and Titus. I have taught a course on Christian Evidences and a course on Greek Grammar (which has basically been a review of what we had learned before the coronavirus guidelines shut us down). This week, we will be beginning two new courses. Rocco Pierce will be teaching a class on Bible Geography, and I will be continuing teaching Greek Grammar.

## A Note about Our Students

At this point, I must take time to compliment our students! When we first decided to resume in-person classes, we were not sure how many of our students would return. However, on the first day of classes, *all* of our students were present and accounted for! Since resuming, they have all been enthusiastic in their studies. In fact, the general response has been that they missed being in class, and they have a greater appreciation for the program. We continue to see this new group of students grow closer together. We look forward to the opportunity to continue teaching them.



## Short Courses

Each year, we make it our goal to bring in six visiting short course teachers. We believe that it is important that our students have the opportunity to learn from a variety of different teachers. The students always love coming for short courses. Unfortunately, the coronavirus has really impacted our short course program this year. As I mentioned in our last letter, we have already had to cancel our April and May short courses. We had hoped to reschedule them for the end of this school year. However, the continued restrictions, mandatory quarantine times for visitors, and the closing of Fiji Airways has made this impossible. We have already had to cancel most of our short courses. We do have one teacher who will be pre-recording his classes and sending them to us. We have another who is still hoping to come, because he had already purchased his airline tickets. While we have not been able to have short course teachers to visit us this year, we remain hopeful that we will be able to schedule teachers for next year. Please pray that the travel restrictions will be lifted so that we can continue bringing in quality teachers to help educate our students in the word and work of God.

## Night Program

There is one other thing that I need to mention. As previously reported, we had started a night program that was a shortened form of our program that was offered one night a week for Christians who work during the day and cannot attend the full-time program. Unfortunately, we have had to suspend this program over the last few months due to the curfew and travel restrictions. As those restrictions ease up, we will be revisiting the program. We hope to be resuming those classes as soon as possible.

