Dear Friends,

I hope that this message finds all of you doing well. The work here in Fiji has certainly kept us busy over the last few months, but it has been such a great blessing to be a part of the work here. Great things are happening with the work, and we are off to a great start to a new school year. I wanted to send you a short report with three quick pieces of news that I hope you will find to be encouraging and exciting.

First off, Devan and I would like to share the news that our youngest son, Nathan Pierce, was one of ten people who put on Christ in baptism during our recent workshop on the northern island of Vanua Levu. The school was asked to help plan a workshop over the Easter break for the congregations of Vanua Levu. Many of the speakers were students, instructors, or graduates of our program. Several of the baptisms were the result of Bible studies conducted by one of our instructors, Emosi Sailo. One of the baptisms was the wife of one of our current students. We are excited about all of these new precious Christians.  Please join us in praying for them.

Secondly, I am attaching a couple of .pdf reports concerning our recent cyclone disaster relief. In December, we reported to you about the damage on Vanua Levu by Cyclone Yasa (a category 5 storm). Many of you responded with financial support to help with relief efforts. Dad (Rocco Pierce) was the one who primarily oversaw the relief efforts for the storm (while he was working on the initial distributions, I was teaching a couple of marriage seminars on the western side of Viti Levu). So I am attaching a couple of reports that he has put together detailing the work that has been done to help with the cyclone recovery.

Finally, I am excited to report that the Bible Institute at Raiwaqa now has its own official website! I recognize that I have not sent out my regular reports to start the year this year. The primary reason has been that I have spent my time normally devoted to writing reports on putting together a website that will help give a general overview of what we are trying to accomplish here. The website includes some introductory information to what we are doing with the work here in Fiji, schedules of our classes that we are currently offering, introductions to our faculty and staff, and a brief history of the Bible Institute at Raiwaqa. It also has an article on our recent trip to Vanua Levu (check it out under the “News” tab). Lord willing, we will be adding future news articles to this section to keep you up to date on the work here. Of course, there are plenty of pictures throughout the website of our work here, too.  I hope you will take the time to check it all out! The website is listed at: [bir-fiji.com](http://bir-fiji.com/).

I pray that God will bring blessings to you all. Thank you for your support of our work. Words cannot express how much it means to us all. Lord willing, I will be getting out a fuller report in the near future.

May God bless you all,

Jason and Devan Pierce
Bible Institute at Raiwaqa (Fiji)

Dear Friends,

I am writing to inform you that this weekend Fiji had the first positive Covid-19 tests among the general population in a year. This was the result of a worker in the overseas quarantine zone violating protocols and entering the general public over the weekend. While she was out, she attended a Fijian funeral where approximately 500 people had gathered. Currently, three people have tested positive for the virus among the general population: the worker, her daughter, and another woman who also attended the funeral. The Fiji government is continuing to perform contact tracing and testing to determine the extent of the virus’s spread.

Initially, the only cases were reported on the western side of the island in Nadi and Lautoka. This meant that we had to cancel our Saturday program in the West for the time being. However, we were able to continue teaching in Suva during the first part of the week. Unfortunately, it was announced yesterday that the third case was here in Suva (just a couple of minutes drive from where we live). We were notified by the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) last night that all schools must immediately halt all in-person instruction for the time being. In addition to this, the government has ordered a halt to all public gatherings: including sporting events, movies, in-person dining, and all religious services. The initial guidelines are for 14 days and depend upon how far the virus has spread. Currently our plan is to take a break from classes for the next two weeks (an early school break that we can make up later in the year). If the government does not allow us to open after that time, then we will work on moving towards recording our classes digitally and distributing them to the students as we did during the shutdown last year.

We are asking all of you to pray for Fiji during this time. Up until this point, Fiji has been very fortunate that we have not had a widespread breakout of the virus. With the exception of a small handful of people at the beginning of the outbreak last year, the island has remained free of the virus until now. All active cases have been caught in the quarantine screening process. These measures have worked until now. Unfortunately, the reason Fiji has been able to control the outbreaks is that they have shut the country down from all international travel - with the exception of repatriation flights of Fijian citizens from other parts of the world. Since the nation’s number one source of income is from international tourism, this has resulted in considerable financial hardship for the country. The country was working towards beginning to open up for foreign tourism within the next couple of weeks. However, with these most recent cases, the government has decided to halt all international travel to and from the country indefinitely. The truth is, Fiji is simply not prepared for a large outbreak of sickness. They do not have the hospital space or enough medical staff to manage an outbreak. They struggle to keep up with the normal day-to-day medical needs of the people resulting in sometimes lengthy delays for medical procedures in the best of times. The government here has worked hard to prepare for a potential outbreak and have expanded care and testing facilities over the last year. They have commandeered numerous hotel spaces and resorts for use in quarantining travelers and those who have potentially been exposed to the virus. However, they simply do not have the resources to deal with a breakout on the scale that other nations have experienced over the last year.

We are also asking you to say a prayer for our work. We have gotten our school year off to a great start. We are eager to be able to continue the work that we are doing with our students. Please pray to God that we will be able to resume our normal classes quickly.

Thank you so much for all of your support and encouragement for our work here. We thank God for you all. Even though things are challenging, we know that our God is bigger than our problems. We continue to trust in His wisdom and His grace.

May God bless you all,

Jason and Devan Pierce
Bible Institute at Raiwaqa (Fiji)