



# FIJI EVANGELIST

Training Preachers, Bible Teachers, & Church Leaders In The Pacific Islands

**Missionaries: Rocco & Deborah Pierce**

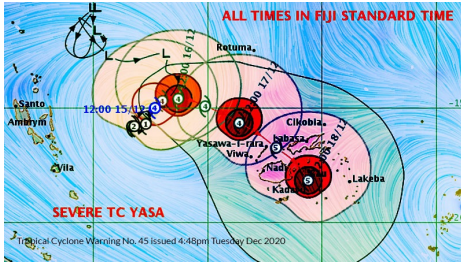
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## Cyclone Yasa Relief Effort

On December 17, 2020 Cyclone Yasa roared ashore, cutting a destructive path the length of Vanua Levu, the second largest island in the Fiji Islands. Yasa was the strongest tropical cyclone since Winston in 2016, as well as the fourth most intense tropical cyclone on record in the South Pacific basin.

### Initial Efforts

We immediately began to try to get information from our sister island to the north (Debbie and I reside on Viti Levu, the largest and most populous island in Fiji to the south west of Vanua Levu). There are congregations of the Lord's church in the villages of Vatudamu, Buca, Nabouwalu, Navare, and the town of Labasa. Slowly reports trickled in that there was no loss of life or serious injuries suffered by the brethren. I began wiring money to each of the congregations to purchase water and food for their members (around 1,000 U.S. dollars split between the four congregations).



Destruction from Cyclone Yasa



Food Packs Loaded for Tavea Island

As contributions came in we began to make a long range plan for more substantial relief. Our initial effort consisted of a two fold plan to supply food and building materials for repairs to damaged homes. Food is necessary for recovery, because the main occupation in the north is subsistence farming. Crops that were grown for food and sale were destroyed and it takes 3 to 6 months to regrow the root crops that are staples in their diet. So we put together 79 packets of food containing rice, flour, sugar, oil, tin fish, and breakfast crackers spending 4,600 U.S. dollars. These food packets were distributed to a total of 102 families in Labasa, Vatudamu, Buca, Nabouwalu, Navare, and the island of Tavea. Tavea island is the home island of Emosi Sailo, one of our instructors at the Bible Institute at Raiwaqa. Emosi and his wife Nancy were able to come over and assist with delivering food and dalo tops and cassava cuttings for replanting ruined crops.



## Assessing the Damage

Debbie and I then put our car on a ferry and came north to assist with distribution and assessment. We arrived in Nabouwalu on the morning of January 7. We spent the first two weeks in Savusavu and the remainder of our time in Labasa. I made trips to Vatudamu, Buca, Labasa, Tavea Island, and Nabouwalu during this time to assess damage and to distribute those things purchased in Suva then shipped north. We were able to store the building materials at the police post while the Fiji military repaired the road to the boat landing so that the materials could be delivered to Tavea Island. Samuela Tupou, a graduate from the school, and a former commander of the Fiji army was able to come over and help with assessment, delivery, and liaison with the Fijian military. He also mobilized the local brethren into four work crews to assist in making repairs.



We had purchased corrugated roofing iron, roofing nails, timber and regular nails at a cost of **4,500** dollars. After making a trip to the north to assess the damage we decided to put all of this material on Tavea Island to repair 20 roofs of homes damaged by Cyclone Yasa. We decided to focus our efforts on the roofs of houses damaged in the storm to prevent further damage to their property by rain. They will straighten out the metal that was damaged by the storm to repair their walls.

## Further Purchases

We then purchased more materials to repair the roofs of 11 families in Vatudamu and also expand the home of Romulus O'Brien to accommodate the 50 people that regularly attend worship services in his small living room. The roofing iron, timber, louvered windows, nails, and cement for this project cost **3,500** dollars.

The hardware stores in the north have run out of roofing iron, so we have contracted with a company in the southern island to manufacture 466 corrugated panels to be distributed to Labasa, Buca, Nabouwalu, Navare, and Tavea Island at a cost of **9,500** dollars.



Movono (far left), a graduate, overseeing dalo and cassava cuttings for farmers in the north.

I have purchased timber, nails, louvers, and strapping for 14 homes in Nabouwalu at a cost of **2,500** dollars; timber nails, strapping, and 2 toilets for 13 families and to expand the church building in Buca at a cost of **750** dollars; timber, nails, strapping, and paint to repair homes and paint the church building in Labasa at a cost of **750** dollars.

We also paid **750** dollars to get 1600 dalo tops and 1000 cassava cuttings to replant gardens in Nabouwalu and Vatudamu. We spent an additional **1000** dollars for transport for workers and materials. To date we have spent around **28,000** U.S. dollars.

We have enough money left over to make two more food distributions. This is necessary because of the length of time that it will take to regrow their crops.

## Spiritual Component

Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). This is the reason we felt it important to make repairs and renovations on church buildings in Vatudamu, Buca, Labasa, Nabouwalu, and Navare. We also printed and enclosed tracts in the food packets we distributed. Debbie put together children's materials for Bible class for the churches in Vatudamu, Buca, and Labasa.



Joeli baptizing Bill into Christ



Sunday services in Romulus' livingroom

We were also privileged to attend services with congregations in Vatudamu, Buca, and Labasa. We were thrilled when one of Joeli's boys decided to put Christ on in baptism. Joeli is one of the preachers at Buca and he and his wife Litia have taken in several young men to mentor. This was fruit of their labors.

Our last food distribution is planned for Easter weekend when Buca will host a workshop for the congregations in the North. It is our plan to bring the students and faculty from the school to teach in this effort. Our theme will be, *"When Things Go Bad, God Is Still Good!"*

## Grateful Appreciation

In closing let me say "Vinka vaka levu (thank you very much)" for your prayers and generosity during this challenging time in Fiji. The people here have repeatedly told us to express their heartfelt appreciation for what you have done for them. Your kindness and compassion has lifted their spirits and they are genuinely grateful. I listened to one of the village leaders lead a prayer of thanksgiving on the Island of Tavea with a catch in his voice and tears in his eyes.

May God reward you for all that you have done!

Your servants in Christ,

**Rocco & Debbie Pierce**



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2 Corinthians 9:10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have [sown] and increase the fruits of your righteousness,