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



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**2021 MID-YEAR REVIEW**

1 Bula from Suva, Fiji! This year has been another roller coaster of a  
 2 year that has been filled with ups and downs. But God continues to  
 3 smile upon us and the work we are doing here in Fiji. In this report, I  
 4 want to give a summary of the first six months of our work here in  
 5 Fiji. While the year hasn't gone the way we had planned (i.e., a  
 6 cancelled reporting trip to the U.S. over the Christmas break; a  
 7 lengthy Covid-19 shutdown that may last to the end of the year), God  
 8 has continued to open up new opportunities for us to serve Him here  
 9 in Fiji. Rather than focusing upon the negative things in life, we  
 10 choose to focus upon the positive opportunities that God has opened  
 to us through these difficult circumstances. As always, we thank you  
 for your kind words of encouragement, your prayers, and your  
 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."**



## MARRIAGE SEMINAR

The school break between November and February of this past year was supposed to be a time for us to return to the U.S. for the purpose of reporting on our work here in Fiji. Unfortunately, the global outbreak of Covid-19 made travel back to the U.S. impossible. But God used the time here in Fiji to open up new doors of opportunity! One of those doors was in the form of expanding our work in the West with the Nadi and Lautoka congregations. I have previously reported about the opportunity to start a Saturday program that meets every other Saturday. These classes are normally limited to the men and typically have 9-10 in attendance.

During the break, we wanted to do something that would encourage all of the members. One of the biggest issues confronting the church here in Fiji is marriage and family problems. So, we decided to have a marriage seminar in January. The seminar actually came in two parts that took place on back-to-back weekends.

During the first weekend, I held a marriage seminar at the Lautoka church of Christ (the Nadi congregation also brought a busload). We had sessions on Friday night and all day on Saturday. The seminar was entitled, "Navigating the C's of Marriage." The topics covered were:

- Consummation: The Joys of the Marriage Bed
- Commitment: Building a Marriage Which Lasts
  - Part 1: What God Has Joined Together
  - Part 2: Taking Divorce Off the Table
- Troubled C's: Challenges to a Successful Marriage
  - Part 1: Communication: The Power of the Tongue
  - Part 2: Cash: Bread Winners and Money Spenders
  - Part 3: Children: Arrows in the Quiver
- Cleaving: Learning How to Cling to One Another
  - Part 1: Leaving: The Bliss and Blisters of In-Laws
  - Part 2: Cleaving: To Have and to Hold

We had great attendance for the seminar - particularly among some of the younger couples and families. On Friday night, Devan also taught a children's class since the subject matter was more adult-oriented. The event went so well that we are hopeful that we can have a similar seminar in the Suva area in the future.

During the second weekend, I taught a course on the book of Song of Solomon. This was an all-day Saturday course. It was hosted by the Nadi congregation. Again, we had very good attendance.





**CYCLONE RELIEF**

While I was busy doing marriage seminars in the West, Dad and Mom were on the north island of Vanua Levu doing cyclone disaster relief. On December 17, 2021, Fiji was hit by Cyclone Yasa (a category 5 storm). While all of Fiji was impacted by the storm, the eye went directly across the northern island of Vanua Levu. Numerous homes were damaged, and nearly all of the planted crops were destroyed. This is a major issue, since most of the population on the island are subsistence farmers (meaning that survive on the food that they grow). It can take anywhere between 3 and 6 months to regrow the root crops that serve as their staple foods. Following the storm, we put out a call asking for funds to help do relief work. Wow, did you respond! We were so humbled by the generous outpouring of financial support you sent during this tragedy. Thank you!!!

Following the cyclone, we were able to immediately wire money to four different congregations in Vanua Levu to provide immediate relief to the members there. Then, in January, Dad and Mom made the trip to Vanua Levu to assess damage and provide further support. While there, they were able to provide building materials to repair homes and church buildings damaged by the storm. They were also able to deliver 79 food packets that went to help feed 102 families on the island.

While they were there, a second cyclone (Ana) struck the island, bringing heavy rains and causing major flooding. Thankfully, their hotel room was on the second floor, since the whole bottom floor was completely submerged during the flood! Their trip back to Suva was delayed by a week, but thankfully no further harm came to them. But it do slow down the storm recovery for those living on the island.

In March, Samuela Tupou (an alumnus of BIR) made a trip to Vanua Levu to oversee the distribution of more building materials to continue to help with home repairs. During that time, he also oversaw the delivery of three large water tanks that were placed Vatudamu, Buca, and Nabouwalu. These were placed at the church buildings of the congregations to provide fresh water to the villages in future storms and crises.

Then, in April, we took our students and returned to Vanua Levu to help conduct a workshop (more about the workshop later in the report). During that trip, we were also able to make a second food delivery. We delivered food packets to 105 different families that contained essential, non-perishable foods. We also provided the food for all meals during the three-day workshop (feeding around 150-200 people three meals a day).

## NEW CLASS



This year, we have been blessed to have a total of eight students to enroll in our full-time program (plus one graduate who had to make-up a missed course from their time as a student at BIR). This is particularly exciting since at one point we were afraid that we might only have two students! The Covid-19 travel restrictions have made it impossible for us to recruit or bring in new students from off island. This means that we are limited to only bringing in new students from here in Fiji.

We have three returning full-time students. Petelo and Moana Tulaga are out only non-Fijian students. They come from Samoa. They enrolled in February just before the coronavirus outbreak began. We are praying that they will be allowed to return to Samoa after they graduate in November. Ase Solinadrotini is the daughter of one of our previous graduates (Kitione Solinadrotini). She comes from the Naila village and is consistently one of the best students in the program. She recently helped teach her first children’s class and loved it.

While Covid-19 has hampered our recruiting efforts, God has still provided us with new students in our program. Romulus O’Brien was doing the preaching for the Vatadamu congregation on the north island of Vanua Levu. The congregation there meets in his home. Romulus is full of life and energy. He is a natural leader. He has moved to Suva in order to enroll in our program. One of the benefits of having Romulus here is that he is a natural recruiter for the school! By the end of his first week here, he had convinced Mosesi (a young Christian from Nabouwalu on the northern island) to come and enroll in the program. After completing the first course, Romulus also convinced



his wife, Mereani, to enroll in the program. This was a big deal, because they have five children! However, one of our previous graduates agreed to babysit the children who were not school aged so that she could attend the program. Another new student is Joji Vuetimaiwai. Brother Joji was converted a number of years ago. However, he had become unfaithful. A couple of years ago, he returned to the church. This year, he decided to enroll in the program so that he can return to his home island of Kadavu to plant a new congregation of the Lord’s church. Then, in April, we had a new student to enroll in the program. Marau Matikabau is the son of brother Semisi, one of the Christians here in Suva.

## VANUA LEVU WORKSHOP

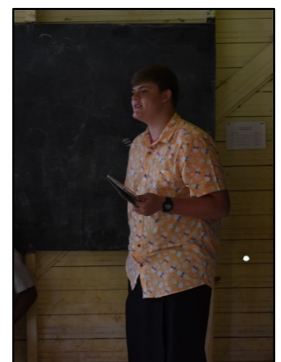
While Dad was doing cyclone disaster relief on Vanua Levu, some of the Christians approached him to ask if he could put together a workshop to encourage the Christians there. So, Dad organized a workshop with all of the speakers coming from the local churches on Vanua Levu and from the faculty and students of BIR. The workshop was held on April 2-4 (Easter weekend). The theme was “God is Still Good When Things Go Bad.” All of the topics dealt with the goodness of God during trying times. The topics were:

- God is Still Good When I Lose Everything (Job 1:13-22)
- God is Still Good When My Faith Grows Weak (Psalms 73:1-5, 15-18)
- God is Still Good When I am Criticized (Psalms 41:5-11)
- God is Still Good When A Family Member is Lost (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-3)
- God is Still Good When I Suffer Illness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
- God is Still Good When the End is Near (2 Timothy 4:6-8; Psalms 116:15)
- God is Still Good When I Feel Alone (1 Kings 19:9-18)
- God is Still Good When A Loved One Dies (John 11:21-22)
- God is Still Good When the Waves Roll High (Mark 4:35-41)
- God is Still Good When We Mess Up (Psalms 103:8-13)
- God is Still Good When the Storm Rages (Psalms 107:23-32)



It was such an encouraging time for everyone. We had close to 200 people from all over the island in attendance for the workshop. During the workshop, ten different people made the decision to respond to the Lord’s invitation to be baptized into Christ! For more information about the workshop, you can check out our report on the school’s webpage at: <https://www.bir-fiji.com/post/bir-visits-savusavu>.

During the workshop, our whole team stayed busy! Devan and Mom (Debbie Pierce) taught children’s classes. Cory and Caleb taught three youth classes. Dad and I each delivered a lesson. We also operated the sound system, recorded all the lessons, and conducted a question and answer session after the Friday night and Saturday night sessions. I even led some songs during a couple of the youth classes. While there, we also got to spend time bonding with all of our students, who also were busy helping with the teaching and preaching. It was such a positive and uplifting time for all of us!



### NATHAN’S BAPTISM



One of the most exciting things to come out of the Vanua Levu Workshop was the number of people who decided to put on Christ in baptism. Ten precious souls made the decision to obey the gospel call to have their sins washed away in the blood of Christ through baptism. One of those souls was my youngest son, Nathan. Nathan had been talking to Devan some about it, but he had not made any decision. So, we were all pleasantly surprised when following my sermon during the Sunday afternoon session he came forward and asked to be baptized. So, we all marched down to the creek where I had the great pleasure of baptizing him in the body of Christ. We are so proud of Nathan for making this great decision.

### NEW ELDERS AT RAIWAQA

The goal of our program has always been to train Christian ministers and church leaders. That is why is especially exciting for me to announce that we have had three different graduates of our program to be appointed as elders in their local congregations! In November, Movono Roko graduated from our full-time program. The day after his graduation, he was installed as an elder for the congregation in Delaidamanu (a village on the river about an hour and half drive outside of Suva).



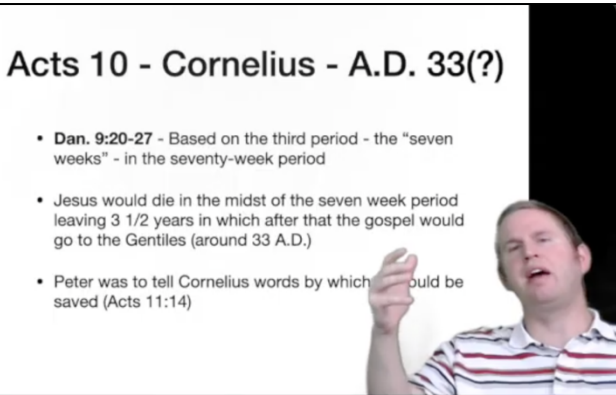
On Sunday, March 7, the Raiwaqa Church of Christ installed Emosi Sailo and Lesio Saurara as elders. This was a big step. The congregation at Raiwaqa celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, but they had never had elders. Both Emosi and Lesio (as well as their wives) are graduates of BIR. Emosi and Lesio immediately got to work in their new positions. Unfortunately, they were just getting started in their new duties when we were struck with a new outbreak of Covid-19 that forced us to have to shut down all in-person worship activities. During the lockdown, they have both worked hard to stay in communication with members through sending daily devotional messages via Facebook Messenger, distributing communion supplies to members, calling shut-ins, and delivering benevolence aid. Additionally, brother Emosi leads a live worship service through Facebook Messenger for the widows and families who do not have anyone to teach or lead the worship. I must commend these two men for the way that they have stepped up to lead in such a challenging time.

## COVID-19 OUTBREAK

At the end of March, it felt like things were finally returning to normal here in Fiji. We had already completed nearly a full year of having no new positive Covid-19 cases. We had been freely moving around within the country and between islands for several months. Resorts were opening back up for locals (at least on the weekends). Movie theaters and sporting events were reopening. International flights were scheduled to resume in April, finally opening up the country to international travel. Most importantly, we were finally given permission to worship at full capacity, meaning we could return to normal worship services, rather than split worship assemblies. It felt like things were finally returning to “normal.”

Then, in mid-April, a couple of employees in the border quarantine zones broke protocols. Sadly, one of them then attended a funeral with more than 500 guests from all over the island. A couple to days later, the employee tested positive for Covid-19 during routine testing. In the beginning, the outbreak was contained to the Nadi-Lautoka area. That region was immediately put on lockdown to try to quickly contain the virus with the hopes of things only last a few weeks (as it had in 2020). Unfortunately, one of the guests from the funeral had already brought the virus back home to Suva. Soon, cases began popping up in the Lami-Suva-Nausori area. Before long, we had a full-blown outbreak on the main island of Viti Levu, with most of the cases here in the Suva area. This area has now been locked down as a “containment zone.” Essential businesses can still operate (so we can get things like groceries), but no one is permitted to enter or leave the containment zone to prevent the virus from spreading to other parts of the island.

On the evening of Tuesday, April 28, we received notification from the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) that we must suspend all in-person classes immediately. Initially, we were informed that we would only be closed for a period of two and half weeks. The date was later changed to June 21. Unfortunately, in June, the case numbers began blossoming. On June 19, we received notification from the FHEC that we must suspend all in-person classes indefinitely.



In response to the government directives, we immediately closed the school and went on break for two and half weeks. During that time, we worked on developing a plan for how to respond. At the end of the break, we began delivering written assignments to our students. These were homework assignments that would then be credited to future courses. We did this for five weeks. When it became clear that we were likely not going to be able to resume courses in mid-June, we began developing plans to go to a pre-recorded video format. We already had two video courses prepared by short course teachers who were unable to visit in person due to the closure of international traffic into Fiji. On June 19, we distributed tablets to our students with two video courses on them (along with all of the printed materials they needed for the classes). The two classes were: *New Testament Church* by Shane Fisher and Church History by *Paul Merideth*. While the students were taking those courses, Dad and I were busy recording the next round of courses. At the end of the two weeks, we distributed new SD cards with the next two courses. Dad recorded a course on *Genesis*, and I recorded a course on *God’s Plan of Salvation* (a study on the cross and its connection to New



Testament Christianity). Following these courses, we will be doing video courses on *Exodus-Deuteronomy* (taught by Rocco Pierce), *1-Peter and Jude* (taught by Emosi Sailo). These will be followed by *Old Testament History: Joshua-Esther* (taught by Jason Pierce) and *Prison Epistles* (taught by Rocco Pierce). All courses will last two or three weeks (depending on the subject matter).

For now, we will continue doing pre-recorded videos. However, we are also exploring the possibility of using Zoom to do some live classes in the future. The biggest obstacle is dealing with the challenges of getting the technology to work here. So far, the students seem to be responding enthusiastically to the video courses and assignments. Unfortunately, one of our students (brother Joji) has not been able to take the classes by video. This is because he had traveled back to his home island of Kadavu to be with his wife on their farm when Suva went on lockdown. He has not been permitted to return to Suva, so we cannot reach him with the videos. However, all of other students have been active in watching the courses and doing the course work.



### COVID RELIEF

The last year has brought a great deal of economic hardship to Fiji. Fiji’s economy is very dependent upon foreign tourism. With Covid-19, the travel industry has taken a huge hit. The resorts and restaurants are closed, which means thousands have lost jobs over the last 15 months. The latest lockdown has closed down other businesses and factories, resulting in even greater numbers of unemployed.

Since the most recent shutdown, we have been blessed to be able to do a couple of food distributions here in Fiji. During the each distribution, we were able to put together food boxes containing rice, flour, tin fish, sugar, tea, noodles, cooking oil, powdered milk, peanut butter, oatmeal, toilet paper, and a few other small items. During the first distribution, we were able to put together food boxes for twenty families at the Raiwaqa congregation in Suva. We were also able to wire funds to the leaders at the Nadi, Lautoka, and Naikatini congregations to purchase the same items for the needy members of their congregations. In total, we were able to help 52 families during that effort. Six weeks later, we were able to do a second food distribution. We purchased the same basic list of items. This time, we were able to put together 32 boxes for the members of the Raiwaqa and Naikatini congregations. We were also able to wire funds to the leaders of the Nadi and Lautoka congregations to purchase items for their members.

We currently have enough funds to do a third distribution in a few weeks. We are trying to space the distributions out between 6 and 8 weeks. We have been able to do these distributions through the donations of Christians. We are so thankful for the generosity of God’s people during these difficult times!





## HOME WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Even the worst situations God can bring about positive results. Unfortunately, as a result of the new Covid-19 outbreak, one of the very first actions that the government took was to ban all in-person gatherings for religious services. This means that we are not allowed to assemble and meet with Raiwaqa congregation. Unlike last year, we are not even allowed to divide up and meet in small groups. So, for now, we are having to meet for worship at home. Every Sunday we worship with my parents. While this is certainly not the way we want things to be, there have been some benefits to meeting at home for worship. One of them has been in giving my sons, Cory, Caleb, and Nathan opportunities to practice leading in worship. Cory and Caleb have both already had opportunities to lead in worship with the Raiwaqa congregation. However, Nathan has never been able to lead in worship. Since going to home worship services, Nathan has been able to lead a couple of songs, wait on the Lord's Supper table (including doing a devotional), read Scripture, and lead prayers. Cory and

Caleb have both taken turns preaching. On Father's Day, the boys decided that they wanted to lead the entire worship service themselves. All three of them gave a short sermon (which they wrote themselves), led a song, and led a prayer. They also took care of the Lord's Supper and giving. While I long for the day that we can return to worshipping with our Fijian family, I am grateful for the opportunity to help my sons develop and grow in their service to the Lord.

This benefit is not limited to our own home. During last year's shutdown, the congregation was divided into numerous groups based upon their location. One of the members, brother John N., was the only male Christian in his group. To my knowledge, he had never preached or taught a Bible class before that time. Because of the shutdown, he had to take on the teaching and preaching responsibilities for the group meeting in his home. Once we were allowed to resume meeting at the church building, he became a regular part of the preaching rotation! He has become a very serious student of the word of God and great teacher. Out of this tragedy, God is building new teachers and church leaders here in Fiji!

## UPDATE ON NIGHT & SATURDAY PROGRAMS

Over the last couple of years, we have been reporting on a couple of additional programs that we are operating here in Fiji. The first is a night program which we have here in Suva for Christians who work and cannot attend the full-time program. This program is overseen by Emosi Sailo, who does most of the recruiting and teaching for the program. Emosi has done a great job with that program. So far, we have completed the following courses: *Life of Christ*, *1-2 Peter and Jude*, *Preparation and Delivery of a Sermon*, *Denominational Doctrines*, and *Personal Evangelism*. During the Personal Evangelism class, brother Emosi had his students out distributing tracts and have conversations to set up Bible studies. This was particularly exciting since most of the students in that class had *never* been a part of an evangelistic outreach effort before! The most recent course was *The Writings of John*. The students had just begun that course when we went on shutdown.

Last year, we began reporting on an effort to encourage and train the Christians in the West. Every other weekend, Dad and I travel to the West to teach classes on Saturday. We usually stay and visit either the Nadi or Lautoka congregations on Sunday. They often ask us to preach when we are there. So far, we have had courses

on *Backgrounds of Early Christianity, Leadership in Nehemiah, and Hermeneutics*. Our most recent courses are *Planned Preaching and Revelation*. We were in the middle of these courses when we went on shutdown.

Unfortunately, with the current regulations, we have had to close both of these programs for the time being. We plan on resuming them as soon as the government regulations allow us to do so. In the meantime, we are discussing ways that we can continue to encourage the brethren in the West while we are unable to travel for in-person visits.

As a side note, on the last Sunday that I was able to be with the Nadi congregation, we had a baptism! Joshua is the teenaged son of Jone Koro, who is one of the leaders at the church in Nadi. He is normally a very shy and reserved young man. He came forward after I had preached and asked to be baptized. So, we took his confession there in front of the congregation. We then all drove down to the beach, where Joshua requested that I baptize him in Jesus Christ. So the two of us waded out into the ocean, and he was baptized. Please pray for Joshua as he begins his life as a new Christian!



### SYMPATHY: BILL STEWART



Covid-19 continues to affect all aspects of life and work around the world. The greatest impact is in the lives that are lost. I am sad to report that our brother in Christ, Bill Stewart passed away from Covid-19 last week. Brother Stewart had a long history of working with the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver. In 2019, he and his wife, Pam, came to visit our school here in Fiji. While here, he taught a short course on *Christ and the Covenants*. He also helped with our second BIR graduation. It was true delight getting to know Bill and Pam during that time. He will be greatly missed. Please keep Pam and the family in your prayers.

### NEW WEBSITE

As previously reported, this year I was able to build and launch a new website for the Bible Institute. The goal of the website is to provide information about the school itself. It contains pages which include an introduction to the school, a school calendar, a course list and course calendar (included an updated 2021 Covid-19 schedule), and history of the school. It also has pictures of our students and graduating classes, as well as a news section that will be used to give reports on various school events and activities. This past week I also updated and launched a mobile version of the app that should load better on your phone. You can check out the website at [bir-fiji.com](http://bir-fiji.com).