



Off to Church on Sunday



At Church



New students this term

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*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.
Psalm 127:1*

This month, our newsletter has been compiled from updates received from Marilyn Cooney, who returned to Suva with Jim in January for the new School year.

Lives Being Changed

We often report the challenges here in Fiji, but this time I'd like to tell the success stories of several of our students.

This is a photo of my first class in Fiji, back in 2002. The class was learning about the days of creation in Genesis; thus the number three, with land, trees, and plants. Avikesh and Lavenia are the two students on the left. Philip, third from the left, is now in high school. His mom works for us in the hostel. She learned sign language, and spoke only English at home instead of Fijian, in order to help Philip. Philip is also a champion table tennis player, and recently travelled to Australia to compete. Jiun and Jisu (right) were children of a missionary couple from Korea. Jiun is deaf, and Jisu, her younger hearing sister, came to school with her to learn sign language. Sadly, Jisu passed away the following year, at age five, from a brain tumor. Jiun has since moved to America with her parents. Sarote, missing from the picture, is in her second year of a two year child care program, which will qualify her to teach preschool when she completes her program.



Avikesh is a Fiji Indian. His father is deaf, and his parents separated when he was very young. His home was a small tin shack in a squatter's village. There was no money for school fees, and most deaf children didn't go to school anyway. But thanks to overseas sponsorship, Avikesh started school at age seven, went through our program, and continued on to high school with an interpreter. He completed high school last year, and is now in a Prep program (called Form 7 here in Fiji) before going on to university. Avikesh is very bright, and a good student. He is living and working in our junior boys hostel as well. Avikesh has developed into a wonderful Christian young man; a leader respected by all, both in the hearing and deaf community. This year Avikesh was chosen to be Prefect of the high school. He was elected by faculty and students, and was honoured today in a special ceremony.

Celebrate

We celebrate with Tema and Tony their gift of a new baby boy (see photo on next page). Loloma levu.

Lavenia too, went through our program and continued on to high school. She completed the high school program, but because of the reading problems of the deaf, she was not able to pass her school leavers exam -- an inappropriate exam for deaf students. She started the year off just staying at home with her family. We felt that was a waste of her talents, and so we hired her as a teacher aide in the school. She has proven to be excellent! She is confident, and very helpful in tutoring students, as well as leading some class lessons. Because Lavenia went through our language program, her English skills are far better than most deaf. She was way ahead of most of the teachers in answering questions during a recent English language workshop! I dropped by her classroom the other day after school, and found her sitting at one of the desks reading a novel! That thrilled me, since most Fijians are not readers -- especially deaf Fijians. She told me that she loves reading, and wants to improve her English skills. I think she will become a fine teacher at GSD in the future. She too, is a wonderful Christian role model for the deaf students. Yes, these are the stories that make all the challenges here worthwhile.



We are thankful to God for the privilege of working with these students, and for the many blessings that we experience daily here in Fiji!

Praise for:

Prayers for:

- ✚ Seeing God work in the lives of Deaf people, young and mature over the past 20 years.
- ✚ Enduring service by Jim and Marilyn Cooney who are spending their retirement years serving Christ with the Deaf of Fiji.
- ✚ More new students this year.
- ✚ A baby boy for Tony and Tema

- ✚ Wisdom for our leaders, and especially for those with the senior boys and girls, and those over teachers.
- ✚ The establishment of a Deaf school in the Solomon Islands by a few people who have spent time at our Deaf school in Suva.
- ✚ Someone to work alongside Jim Cooney.



Some of our Hostel ladies with two interns

Tema & Tony with baby Ternik

Celebrating some birthdays, picnic style

If you would like to make a contribution, please make cheques out to **Global Connections in Mission** (n.b. 7.4% to a maximum of \$200 is deducted by GCiM before sending to us). **Please do not send gifts direct to Fiji.**

Alternatively, you can make an online deposit to bank account **06 – 0729 – 0336879 – 00** with the Reference set to **FIJI DEAF.**

Either way, please **always** send the details below to GCiM at **PO Box 744 Palmerston North New Zealand**, or to **admin@gc3.org.nz** so we know who it is from and the purpose.

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\$..... is Enclosed Paid Online For the **Harland Deaf Ministry Trust of Fiji** to help with:

Greatest need Hostel activity School for the Deaf Building Programme Teacher Scholarship