

Fiji Deaf Ministry, PO Box 2495, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

*You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.*

*Isaiah 26: 3*

## Facebook Page

Did you know that the Deaf School has its own Facebook page? There are some great photos there and it does get updated from time to time. Logon to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and just search for "Fiji Gospel School For The Deaf".

## Beginnings

It was not very long ago that the Deaf in Fiji did not have a sign language. In fact, the founder of our ministry, Mrs Vivienne Harland, herself deaf, was one of those who helped develop Fiji Sign during the 1990s. Sign language was not taught at any school in Fiji and this was one of the motivations for beginning the Gospel School for the Deaf – so that the Deaf might learn their own language and develop their own special culture and community and "hear" the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Generations

The Deaf Ministry has a long term interest and God willing, it will be there for generations of Deaf students. Since the Gospel School for the Deaf (GSD) began in 1998, with just a few children in a local church hall, the early students have become adults and some are even working in the Ministry as teachers and carers. Indeed, as our Director delights in telling people, the Deaf Ministry is the largest employer of Deaf people in Fiji. This is wonderful and shows how God has blessed the work throughout the years. Many have helped in this work and you too are receiving this newsletter because of your ongoing interest. The Ministry is more than the School. It aims to help adult Deaf as well and although our main activity to date has been the School and Hostels we do not ignore our adult ministry. A generation has now passed from when the Ministry began and Deaf adults involved in the Ministry have married and had children who are now entering adulthood. In this issue, we give a few snapshots of our Deaf folk and how God has been blessing them and us.

## Mesake and Family



One of the earliest deaf people to be contacted by the Ministry was Mesake. Mesake attended a camp in Savusavu run by Vivienne and her husband Geoff, missionaries in Fiji, near Mesake's home. Vivienne then taught Mesake to read in a Bible class in her home. He basically grew up in her home in Fiji. He later married a wonderful deaf woman, Seriana - a marriage, if not arranged, at least strongly encouraged by Vivienne. After Geoff and Vivienne moved to Suva, Mesake and his wife moved into the small apartment underneath Vivienne and Geoff's house. They later moved to Lautoka, Fiji's second largest city, on the western side of the main island near Nadi.

Mesake and Seriana have 8 children, all of whom are hearing and Mesake pastors a small

Deaf church in Lautoka.

Mesake's oldest child is Vivienne, aka Vivi. She is 19 and has recently returned to Suva to attend university. She is staying in our main hostel, helping out with the children there while taking classes. Since Vivi has spent most of her life interpreting for her parents, she has become an excellent signer, and interprets occasionally for church services on Sundays. We're encouraging her to become a teacher at GSD when she finishes her degree. Mesake works as a carpenter during the week in Suva, and stays in the Junior Boys' hostel, mentoring the boys there. He does excellent work, and we've just hired him to build a new playground for our younger students.



**Avikesh and Father**

Avikesh is a Fiji Indian. His father is deaf and has not received any education (no we do not have a photo of him with Avikesh). Avikesh's 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.

Avikesh is very bright, and a good student. He has developed into a wonderful Christian young man; a leader respected by all, both in the hearing and deaf community.

While at High School, Avikesh was chosen to be a prefect after being elected by faculty and students. This year, Avikesh is attending university and is studying to become an accountant. He is living and working in our Junior Boys' hostel as well.



**Lavenia**

Lavenia, a native Fijian (otherwise called iTaukei) also went through our program from a young age and continued on to high school. She completed the High School program, but because of the reading problems as a deaf person, she was not able to pass her school leavers exam – an inappropriate exam for deaf students. She started the year off in 2015 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 and this year has responsibility for a class as a lead teacher! 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! Marilyn (our Director's wife and deaf education advisor) dropped by her classroom one day after school, and found her sitting at one of the desks reading a novel! That was a thrill, since most Fijians are not readers – especially deaf Fijians. She told Marilyn that she loves reading, and wants to improve her English skills. We think she will be a great teacher at GSD and is a wonderful Christian role

model for the Deaf students.

<p><b>Praise for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ God bringing people dedicated to work in the Ministry over the 20 years or so it has been in existence; and for how many Deaf have been helped</li> <li>✚ The promise of land on which to build a new hostel and the input of an architect to design it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Prayers for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ The NZ couple who have committed to going to Suva to help in the Ministry, that they will receive work visas</li> <li>✚ Strength for Jim and Marilyn Cooney to return and continue leading the Ministry</li> <li>✚ The students and their families that have been impacted by Cyclone Winston in February.</li> </ul>
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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