

FIJI DEAF MINISTRY

“Bula”

Wherever you are in the world, we know that you will be going through uncertain times, but we also know that God is still in control. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read – “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” How reassuring!!

Message from Sue & Russell Neate

We received an hour's notice on Friday 20th March, that school holidays would be brought forward by four weeks and would start that afternoon. The first job was to notify parents and ask that they come and take their children back to their villages where there was less chance of them being in contact with the virus. By Saturday evening, most children had gone and now we have just two of our cooking class students, and our group from Vanuatu remaining. There is a possibility that the government of Vanuatu will send a plane to take any citizens of Vanuatu home, as Fiji Airways have stopped flying there. However, at the date of issuing this newsletter, the Vanuatu students and trainee teacher are still in Suva and so have escaped the Category 5 cyclone that hit Port Vila, their hometown.

Our children's parents are anxious to have their boys' home.

Most staff have also gone home and we await a further announcement at the end of the first two weeks to see if the holidays will be extended. After a change of plans and a quick pack up, we arrived back in Christchurch with an hour and half to spare before NZ went into lock down, and at this stage we are unsure as to when we will be able to return. Thank you to those who were praying.

As I finish, thank you again for your support and interest. I received a text from a friend this morning and she finished with these words **“Our God reigns”**.

Our three cooking students have enjoyed their first term of learning and do put some of their new skills into practice at home. Last week I came across the older boys enjoying banana fritters/pancakes cooked by Lario in the boy's hostel. Here is our “team” all dressed for “another day at the office.” From left to right are Lario, Vitalina, and Tiare. Thank you to those who contributed to Tiare's course fees - he very much appreciates your generosity and will now be able to return to Kiribati at the end of the year with a qualification, and hopefully find employment.



A few weeks ago, we were invited by the same private hospital as last year, to take all of our children and staff for free medical checks and lunch. We were delighted, that apart from a few minor ailments, most of our children were given a good report, and the volunteer medical staff were impressed by their good health. We have had chicken pox in the hostel recently, and while those children went home to recover, these early holidays will break the cycle and prevent further infection, which is something we can be thankful for. Here are Michael, Aliti, and Tuvou holding four-year-old Waisea, after they had completed their medical

check.

This year, Christine (hearing) teaches class eight, our highest level before the children move on to Gospel High. Christine enjoys her teaching, and she can often be heard having a laugh with her children. She lives in the senior girl's hostel, is very much involved with the girls outside of school hours, and is a fantastic help to "Ma", the hostel mother. Thank you, Christine.



Seru (deaf) came to GSD when he was seven in 1999, has been right through our hostels and school, and now teaches in our kindergarten class. The children love Seru, and have great respect for him. If a trip to see Seru is suggested when a child is misbehaving, that is usually enough to

make them sit up and listen!

We value Seru and wish to thank him for his contribution to GSD over many years.



Current Situation

Although Cyclone Harold passed close to Suva, none of our buildings were affected and those of our staff who are still in the hostels along with their own children and the few students who have been unable to return home, are all safe.

Liti, one of our hostel personnel had her house flooded, at her village near Suva.

Mesake, one of our trustees, who often works in Suva but lives in Lautoka, was prevented from returning to his home and family because of COVID-19 restrictions; while his family was prevented from leaving Lautoka for the same reason. The lockdowns have just been ended. The school situation in Fiji has changed and schools will not resume until 15 June. The children are to be given work to do at home by schools over this period, preferably by online means, which is a real challenge for us. Teachers will be reporting to school on 20 April to prepare the work for students.

Please Pray -

- For protection of students and staff from COVID-19 and for wisdom in restarting once the Government allows
- That Russell and Sue will be able to manage Ministry affairs as necessary for the indefinite period of COVID-19 restrictions in both NZ and Fiji.
- For God's provision as staff and rents are continuing to be paid without Government assistance.
- Give thanks for how everyone has been kept safe.

If you would like to make a contribution, please do so through **GC Aid** at <https://www.gc3.org.nz/donate>

Please do not send gifts direct to Fiji. Alternatively, you can make an online deposit to bank account **06-0729-0522196-00** with the Reference set to **Fiji DEAF**.

Either way, please **always** send the details below to GC Aid 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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For the Harland Deaf Ministry Trust of Fiji to help with:

☐ Greatest Need ☐ Hostel Activity ☐ School for the Deaf ☐ Building Programme ☐ Teacher Scholarship