

Report of a Trip to Fiji

Margaret Tong

Trip to Fiji? How did that happen? Was it just a tourist trip? Well, yes and no!

Let me fill in the background to our first trip to Fiji

My husband, Norm, is a Wesleyan Methodist pastor, and in 1998 he was asked to be the pastor for the Melbourne Fijian Wesleyan Methodist Church (WMC), which he was for 2 years, as well as being the Senior Pastor at Hilton St, Glenroy WMC. I am the Librarian at Kingsley College, a Wesleyan school of Theology and Bible College, Glenroy (Melbourne, Australia).

The members of the Melbourne Fijian WMC raised money to purchase books for the Davuilevu Methodist Theological College Library, Fiji and then decided that they would like to accompany the books to Fiji and present them personally to the college. This trip was organised and undertaken in September 2001 and we were able to accompany them.

The itinerary for our two weeks in Fiji included several days at the theological college, at Nausori, near Suva, in their guest house, four days at a resort on the Coral Coast and the rest of the time spent at the Jasper Williams Methodist Girls High School, Lautoka (in their sick bay! We weren't sick – it was the only accommodation available – but much appreciated, anyway!) So yes, some of our trip was spent as a tourist.

While at the theological college we spent time in their library and also visited the Lelean High School, located on the same campus. At the theological college I found that they had no operating card catalogue and their system had long since ceased to operate properly, if indeed it had ever done so, effectively! Locating a title simply meant browsing along the shelves of books! Lelean High School were in the process of building a new library and I was able to send them the layout of our updated and extended library at Kingsley, which they have been able to use as a guideline for their library layout.

Consequently, as the theological library was obviously in need of an update and a proper operating system, they were very open to any help and advise that I could give, and I was able to give the lady working in the library (Joana Waqairatu, who is also the Principal's wife) some basic ideas of how to operate a library and catalogue books, etc. So we felt that the Lord led us to go there for the month of January 2002.

This time it was a "working holiday" and we spent the whole time at the college, once again in their guest house, which consists of a bedroom, lounge/dining room, enclosed verandah with a kitchen (2-burner gas stove), coldwater shower and toilet. Small, but comfortable, adequate, and much appreciated.

Prior to our second trip, I was able to organise for the college to purchase the Alice library computer programme and I took the software with me to Fiji. This programme was chosen as they were already familiar with it. The Alice Software people also converted Kingsley College's Athena records into a MARC record format, which was loaded onto their computer once the Al-

From the second week onwards, we sorted out the Reference section, unpacked all new and donated books, reorganised the library shelving (Norm was a great help with these) and started computerising the library collection. Some computerisation had previously been commenced but these records were incomplete and on a "borrowed" Alice programme. This has now been rectified and existing records are being updated.

Their library collection is now approximately 6500, but needs to be 12000 volumes by 2003, and they also need a qualified librarian, as part of their accreditation requirements for a Bachelor of Divinity degree, which they plan to offer as from Semester 1, 2003. As a result, they are very keen to receive donations and if anyone has books they would like to donate, please let me know.

Norm and I have been asked to go back to Fiji in 2003, for 2 or 3 years, Norm as the College Administrator (as well as preaching, etc.) and I as the Librarian. At present we are waiting for the Fijian Methodist Church to give approval and for work permits and all other requirements to be organised. We need to know definitely by June 2002, so that Hilton St WMC will know whether they need to call another pastor and Kingsley College will need to know whether they need another Librarian for 2003.

Also, prior to our second visit, we were able to purchase books for the Methodist Theological College, Lelean High School and Jasper Williams Methodist Girls High School, Lautoka, as the result of a generous anonymous donation, which helped greatly. I also organised some information about the "Libcode" library system for both the high schools, as they are both interested in automating their libraries.

We have both thoroughly enjoyed our two trips to Fiji and are so thankful to our Lord for giving us this wonderful opportunity. We now look to the Lord for guidance for our future, wherever He wants us to be, whether it is here in Melbourne or in Fiji.
It will be exciting just to see how His purpose unfolds as 2002 progresses.

*Margaret Tong
Librarian, Kingsley College
Glenroy, Victoria.*

Background information

Davuilevu Methodist Theological College

Principal: Rev. Tui Waqairatu

Situated on several acres of land situated at Davuilevu, across the river from Nausori, the college has 80 theological students. Married students are provided with housing on campus, and the singles in singles quarters. All students have their own gardens.

Of 300 applicants 17 students have begun their studies in 2002. 100 young people are engaged in leadership training.

The Lelean High School, on the same campus, has over 1000 students, with 200 boarders. Church services are held in Baker Hall, also on the property, with several hundred attending. This building is in memory of Rev. Baker, an early Methodist missionary, who was killed and eaten - the only one - fortunately!