

MISSIONS TO KIRIBATI



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Dear Partners in the Gospel,

12th July, 2019

The Word of God states in **Isaiah 55:8-9**, ***“For my thought are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*** I can honestly say that I conceived what I thought was the Lord’s way for us and our ministry. However, in the past six months we have seen the Lord direct our steps in His ways and not in ways we expected or planned. We are resting in the confidence that He will work all things for His glory.

We wrote our last letter from Fiji because we had traded places with my parents, so that Bennett’s leg had time to heal and our family could be together. Looking back, we see the hand of the Lord using us in Fiji and using my parents in Kiribati. We had the opportunity to help with Junior Camp, and over 60 campers attended from several churches in Fiji. We saw young children come to Christ and others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word. The theme was the life of Joseph and the motto was “Do Right!” I was the camp director; Brooke and I taught in the sessions; Daniel was a counsellor; and Adelynn and Bennett were campers. The week after camp we helped my brother build a 40’ by 30’ pavilion which will be used in for camp and other events.

During our time in Fiji, my parents did a wonderful job filling in for us. My father hosted our second Mission Conference and the theme was “Rescue the Perishing.” Praise the Lord for a great conference and an increase in faith promise giving. My mother led the Ladies’ meeting, and my father led the Men’s meeting. The Lord used my father to lead several people to the Lord, some of which we had been praying and witnessing to for a while. One of these was Abwai’s father, Ioane. What a blessing when I returned to see him and his wife attending our services. Since I returned, I have been having discipleship classes with them. A few Sundays ago, I had the wonderful privilege of baptizing both of them. We are so grateful to my parents for coming and ministering to the church here in Tarawa.

At the beginning of May my parents returned to Fiji, I returned to Kiribati, and Brooke and the kids returned to the States for Bennett and Adelynn’s six-month check-ups which is required with their ongoing health issues. Bennett’s asthma has greatly improved, but he had to undergo physical therapy due to severe atrophy from his leg being in a cast for 9 weeks. He is currently doing much better and a full recovery is expected from his broken leg. Adelynn’s doctor started her on a new medication to treat her insulin resistance which is a byproduct of her autoimmune disease. She has experienced many side effects from the medication. Despite medications, her insulin levels continue to rise. They have increased her medications, and we are in a waiting period to see how she responds. Brooke and the kids will remain in the States to deal with these health issues. Please pray for our family as we seek the Lord’s will in all these matters.

Despite those trials, Abwai and Taniera have been a great encouragement. Both of these men have been a tremendous help in the ministry here. Abwai gave up a good paying job on overseas cargo ships to serve the Lord. He has been training and preparing to follow the Lord’s calling in his life. He is a fervent soul-winner and loves to study and preach



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the Word of God. Abwai will be ordained in Fiji in August. The ordination counsel will be comprised of godly pastors and missionaries there. I was already scheduled to speak at the annual Youth Camp in Fiji, so Abwai will join me. Please pray for him, his precious wife, and their two boys as they follow God's will for their family.

After consulting with our Pastor, we believe it is necessary to take another medical furlough. I will return to Kiribati after Abwai's ordination to make final arrangements for the church during my absence. Our hearts are heavy because we desire to be with God's family in Kiribati, but we know that the Lord's ways are higher than our ways and we desire to follow His path for us.

The Lord has led me to leave Tarawa Baptist Church in the interim leadership of Abwai. He has shown himself to be qualified and able to do this work. It thrills our heart to see Kiribati people reaching and leading their people to the Gospel. As this is all happening so fast, we have requested another pastor to assist Abwai in the ministry of Tarawa Baptist Church. We are currently working to obtain a work visa for Pastor and Mrs. Ravai. They are sent out of my father's church in Fiji. I have known them since I was a teenager and am excited to see them serving the Lord here in Kiribati. After praying for the Lord's leading, they have accepted my invitation to come and assist till the end of the year. Would you please pray about helping this dear couple? Perhaps God would lead you to help with their airfare, or even support them monthly. They will need additional support as the cost of living in Kiribati is much higher than Fiji.

We are excited to announce that we have finally completed all the typing, proofing, editing on the Kiribati Bible Project. Upon my return to the states, I plan to get together with the printers to finalize the entire project for printing. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support over the last few years. Please continue to join us as we see this project through to the end.

Praise the Lord our church land has moved forward in amazing ways. The magistrate has approved our lot and will be coming to the site on July 19 to survey and set the stakes. We have already payed for 50 loads of fill to bring the land above flood level. We want to say a special thanks to Yellow Creek Baptist Church as they stepped out by faith to raise \$25,000 during their VBS a few weeks ago. Also thank you to all the other churches and individuals that have sacrificially given so that Tarawa Baptist church can have a permanent home. We are praying that this will be enough to fill the land, put up a fence, dig a well, bring in electricity, and build a temporary building to meet in. Please continue to pray with us as we seek the Lord's wisdom in the days ahead.

We are so very thankful for your continued faithfulness to the Lord and to us as missionaries. Would you join us in praying that the Lord would provide for all the unexpected airfare, medical expenses, and costs of living in two places at the same time? He has always met our needs, and we know He will faithfully do so again. May the Lord continue to be glorified on the equator!

In the Service of the King,
Joel, Brooke, Daniel, Adelynn, and Bennett.

Picture of Brother Abwai preaching —>

