



# JIM & EMI CIVALE

## MISSIONARIES TO THE SAMOAN ISLANDS

Testifying ... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. **ACTS 20:21**

**MARCH 1, 2019**



Dear Friends,

Any veteran missionary would tell you that life on the mission field requires both great faith and great flexibility. That could not have been truer this last month. At the end of January, Pili Fata, a friend of ours who pastors a church in the capital of Samoa, had a massive heart attack. His assistant pastor was away in Fiji for a family funeral and the Lord impressed on my heart to go over to help, preaching for them for two Sundays, the last in January and the first in February. Leaving the church in American Samoa two weeks earlier than I had originally planned, I asked the associate pastor there and church to fill in the gaps. They were flexible and faithful to do so, and the church saw a handful of new members added while I was away.

After my time in the capital covering for Pastor Pili, I headed over to the island of Savaii to our current church plant to help get ready for the visiting missions team that would arrive on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Work on our kitchen project and new



baptistery had already begun in anticipation of the team's arrival. The day after we were under roof, strong winds kicked up and seven days of virtually non-stop rains came. This caused the boats to stop crossing from our island of Savaii to the main island of Upolu where the team would be flying in. It turns out that in a three-day period there was only one boat that crossed and I managed to get on it. After see-sawing all the way across, the captain closed off all crossings after that one trip. They would not resume until two-and-a-half days later. Despite the rough voyage, I was glad I got over to the main island in time to greet the team.

The team and I ended up "stuck" on Upolu for those two-and-a-half days – at least that's how I first saw it – but God used the time for them to be a blessing to our friends, Pastor Peneueta and Mrs. Robyn Faafouina at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Vaitele Fou. We joined them for their mid-week services and one of our visiting preachers, my good friend and fellow BIMi missionary, Jerry Judd, preached a timely message for the church. Based on how God moved in the service, we could all only conclude that God had orchestrated events. I am so thankful for the team of eleven who responded to the delays with such great faith and flexibility.



The next day we crossed over on the 8:00 AM boat to Savaii. Arriving in Asau village in the mid-afternoon, our team wasted no time getting to work. They started the first day by screwing down the new roof on the kitchen extension and planning sub-teams to get everything accomplished. As the team began installing the LED lights in the new kitchen, the electrician in the group discovered more and more electrical problems which led to a whole new project –rewiring our entire house. It took him away from the work he was going to be doing, but faith and flexibility kicked in, and he set to work with one of the young members of the team, Antony, who spent much of his time up in the ceiling/attic removing old wires and installing new ones. Staying well hydrated and coming down often to cool off were necessities for Antony as he and Brother Jerry worked away.

The carpentry sub-team went to work cutting, treating, and varnishing the plywood, all before constructing the cabinets and counters, putting them in place, and gluing the formica sheets in



place. They worked long days, cancelled the planned Saturday island tour, and were determined to finish the work they had come to do. It would be close, but we were confident that they could pull it off. After all, the head of their team was Phil Smith, a veteran carpenter and missionary who has headed many BIMI CLAIM\* construction trips all over the world. It was Brother Phil's second trip to serve in Asau, so he was the most aware of our working conditions.



[\* CLAIM (Christian Laymen Assisting International Missionaries) is a ministry of BIMI (Baptist International Missions, Inc) that allows laymen (and women) to participate in the Great Commission as short-term missionaries. It includes evangelism, construction, medical missions, Bible distribution, mechanics, engineering, computer training and more.]

However, on Saturday, Brother Phil had an accident with his circular saw that cut across the top of his hand, severing four tendons and nicking two of his bones. One of the visiting pastors, Garth Piper, and I rushed Phil and Susan Smith to the clinic four villages away from us where they cleaned the wound but felt that they should not stitch it. Instead, they referred us to the main hospital on our island about two hours from the clinic. There, they



x-rayed the wound and cleaned it again. They concluded that surgery would be necessary over on the main island. Brother Phil and Mrs. Susan would overnight at the hospital there and then go across with a nurse via ambulance on the ferry. Pastor Garth and I headed back home and sent my wife, Emi, and Pastor Jerry's wife, Dawn, to bring the Smiths their luggage and to accompany them for the trip. Praise God, the boats were going again and the weather had calmed down! Over in the capital, the Lord had a visiting surgeon in place who performed



the surgery to rejoin the tendons. We understand from the Smiths who are now back home in Canada, that the doctors in Canada confirmed that the surgery was done properly in Samoa.



Our friends at Lighthouse Baptist Church could not have been more helpful. As soon as their Sunday morning services were over, the pastor, his two deacons, and their wives, headed to meet Emi, Dawn and the Smiths at the hospital. They would stay all day and evening, bring bedding, towels, food, and other necessities, and attend to every need the Smith's might have.



Praise God for great friends in the ministry!

In Asau, the unforeseen circumstances were met again with great faith and flexibility. The Sunday services were lovely. In the morning service a new deacon was ordained and a former deacon re-installed. Visiting pastor, Garth Piper, did a good job preaching and the Lord helped me with the translation. We had a great response at the altar call and then enjoyed feasting and fellowship afterwards. Pastor Jerry Judd then preached the evening service and the Lord blessed again.



After that Sunday, the team would have three more days left. As much as I tried to lower expectations, they insisted that they could get it all done and redoubled



their efforts. They decided to work long and hard hours on Monday and Tuesday and to reserve Wednesday for a day of sight-seeing, if time allowed. It turns out that they would need to work on Wednesday, too, until 11:00 AM, but then we did get time for some sight-seeing. The highlights were swimming and snorkeling with



the turtles and a visit to the market on the other side of the island. We changed the time of our Wednesday evening service until an hour later to give us more time seeing Savaii. Pastor Garth preached in Phil Smith's place for that last service and then we enjoyed a farewell fellowship afterwards. The next morning we crossed back over to the main island and the team flew out later that afternoon.

Emi and I have hosted nearly thirty missions teams or individuals over the last twelve years, and the Lord has blessed over and over again, but this one was different. The previous teams came primarily to be a blessing to the church and school ministries (although they were always a blessing to us, too). This team, on the other hand, came primarily to bless Emi



and me in our home. Their "fingerprints" are all over our home – a new laundry room, a beautiful new kitchen that is nicer than any Emi and I have ever had, a new hallway door to our living room, a working air conditioner in our bedroom, hot water running in our house for the first time, safe and sensible wiring, plugs, and light switches, and so much more. Of course, they were also a great blessing to the church and school as they funded the construction of our new baptistery, preached the deacon ordination and other services, taught in the school, spoke in the chapel services and ladies' meeting, and helped with some clerical tasks in the school.

Another difference with this team is that they prepared all the meals for themselves and for Emi and me, using a tiny stove down at the school as our kitchen was completely out of commission. We are so so thankful to Mrs. Paula (right) and her team for all those great meals.



Thank you for your prayers throughout February. I am now back in American Samoa for the month of March and will share more about what the Lord is doing here next month. Until then, may God bless each one of you.

Your grateful friends,  
*Jim and Emi Civale*

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

1. Please pray for healing for Brother Phil Smith.
2. Please pray for healing for Pastor Pili Fata of Manumalo Baptist Church in Apia, Samoa.
3. Please pray for our new deacon, Olosa'a, and our returning deacon, Vatau.
4. Please pray for Pastor Peneueta, his wife Robyn, and their church that they would be blessed richly for their sacrifices and help to us and the visiting team.
5. Please pray for God's favor upon our team members, Pastor Jerry & Dawn Judd, Pastor Garth Piper, Brother Philip and Susan Smith, and the rest of the team, Peter and Paula, John, Ashley, Nanette, and Antony, who all gave so much of themselves to our family and the people of Samoa.

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