

HOPE VOLUNTEER CORPS - FIJI

For this newsletter, we asked two of our young volunteers, Toby Nguyen and Isabel Statkevitch (both from the Melbourne Church of Christ), to share their experiences in Fiji late last year with the HOPE Volunteer Corps (HVC).

Toby Nguyen

My goal heading into the HVC was to make the most of it. What that looked like was to make sure I fully immersed myself in the culture of Fiji and serve wholeheartedly whether it be on site or in the fellowship. My first HVC experience was definitely one to remember since it had exceeded my expectations in terms of itinerary and also spiritually.

Specifically, away from learning how to serve effectively as a disciple, I wanted to go to Fiji to learn about how God works in a different country. I wanted to see how God works in the Nadi Church for the disciples, but also how He works in the lives of the volunteers. When I realised how diverse the group of volunteers were, I found myself growing in learning about how God works in the disciples whom I was serving alongside. Ultimately, I was able to grow closer to God through this goal by also learning about the testimonies of the volunteers.





My expectations heading into the trip was that every day would consist of tiresome labour-intensive work, depleting our energy to even connect with each other. I had doubts heading into the trip, asking myself, “What have I actually signed up for?” or “Am I even capable of being useful?” But quickly these doubts dissipated within the first few days. To my gratitude, the HOPE team organised a program that was a healthy mixture of leisure, labour and spiritual growth.

My HVC experience was all the more improved because of how we were gifted the opportunity to humble ourselves to God through daily devotionals, led by the volunteers. I found these very encouraging and helpful in my own character as they were a means to remind myself that my relationship with God was the reason why I was able to be in Fiji. Being reminded of this made working on site and fellowshiping with one another more intentional and meaningful.



There were many highlights in the trip. I enjoyed the nightly Burger King runs and cherished the leisure time we had after a long day of service. I was grateful for my D-group, a time we had to reflect on a high and low of each day and anything else that was on our hearts. The absence of D-group would’ve have limited my spiritual growth in this trip. Other

highlights included spending time with the local workers and children, spending Christmas with a little village, Karaoke, White Elephant, Sister’s Encouragement Night and the HVC Led Church Service.

Three devotionals stood out to me on the trip. The first devotional was one that asked us to reflect on why we attended this trip and what we wanted to get out of it. Ensuring that I had a goal throughout the trip, and constantly reminding myself of it really helped me be intentional on this HVC. My second favourite devotional was one about the importance of *vulnerability* as being vulnerable connects us to others and God. This



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catalysed a really raw and open D-group that night, and for that I am grateful. The last devotional was also timely as it focused on the ‘What now?’ and how as HVC volunteers serving doesn’t stop at the end of the trip. We cannot become reminiscent and become downcast, but we should become hopeful and look forward to how God can use our serving hearts to better the Kingdom.

The HVC trip ended with a banquet, a final time of fellowship and reflection with brothers and sisters I had grown closer to in the past two weeks. After hours of service and spiritual growth across the two weeks, the banquet truly felt like heaven. It was a time we could have reflective conversations about our HVC journey and reap the seeds of our service in Fiji. This was an opportunity that I will never forget and encourage you, who have taken the time to read this reflection to challenge yourself and embark on a HOPE Volunteer Corps. It is an experience that teaches you a lot about yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and ultimately spiritually.

Isabel Statkevitch

Over the summer holidays, my family and I had the privilege to serve in the Fiji HVC. During the first week of this trip, we were at ‘Koroipita’, a village dedicated to displaced families. Working together alongside local builders who made homes for a living, we helped out in constructing homes for people in the village. Despite the humidity and occasional sunburn, I made strong lifelong friendships with the volunteers and disciples from around the world, through our bond and common mission in serving and glorying God.



On the second week, we travelled every day to the highlands, where we helped restore the village’s school buildings and dorms. During this week, what I found so special was the fact that although we were there to offer our services in any way we could, the locals demonstrated hearts that wanted to serve us wholeheartedly, through the women of the village providing us traditional Fijian lunch everyday as well as a traditional welcome ceremony as a way of accepting us into their village. I will forever be grateful for the



memories I have made on this HVC trip, and cherish the truly special friendships formed with disciples for over the world.



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