



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

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PNG Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

I've just re-read our January letter and was reminded of what I had written about the turmoil that began our year. It was a turmoil that threatened the very existence and viability of the church at Tatagufa. With much gratefulness we are able to say that 2008 is ending on a much brighter note than it began.

The church is probably now stronger than it has ever been. There is a depth of knowledge and feeling for the gospel we've not seen before, at least not seen so widely. Some of those who have been "fence sitting" for a number of years have now jumped off to be counted with the Lord Jesus. And, to come full circle as it were, it's good to be able to tell you that one of the young men involved in the rapes at the beginning of the year now claims to be converted.

There are, of course, many things left incomplete, much left to be done, numerous hurts to heal, and plenty of scope for learning and maturity. It's good to rejoice and be grateful for the "battles won", but we need to continue to look to the Lord for success in ongoing and future battles, of which we are promised many.

Some of you will know already of the death of Kepsi and Tresa's little boy just a couple of weeks ago. He was about 2 years old. It is uncertain if Kepsi and Tresa are believers – it is sometimes very challenging to know whether they find it difficult to articulate the gospel, or whether they don't understand the gospel to be able to articulate it. Nevertheless both seem to want to stand apart from their former mission group and stand with us and the gospel we preach.

In the past the Lutherans have tried to use the death of our children in the Tatagufa church to undermine the parents' determination to follow the biblical gospel. They have turned up at funerals and have said loudly to everyone that the child has gone to hell because he was not baptised in the Lutheran church. (Here in the Kanite the indigenous Lutheran pastors preach a baptismal regeneration/works gospel.) And they say that the parents are culpable for leaving them to go to what they see as a heretical church.

They did this to Mano and Wendi when their little boy died and it caused an enormous amount of pain for them, as you would imagine. On the first day of the funeral (funeral activities can span a week or more) I urged the Tatagufa believers to protect Kepsi and Tresa from such opportunism, which they did. Later Tresa expressed her gratitude, for she had feared her father (a Lutheran pastor) would say such things to shame them and undermine them. You might care to pray for this young couple, and others like

them. Those who seek to follow the gospel of Grace are faced with enormous challenges and difficulties – this being just one of them.

For the past 12 weeks I've been meeting evangelistically with some people up at the village of Kimiagomo. This has come about because of a visit, 4 years ago, to a man from that village who was incarcerated in a police cell in Kainantu. He remembered my visit, and on his return to his village just a couple of months ago, sent word for me to go up and visit him there. He asked for regular teaching from the Bible. His family and some others join him each week, although, apart from his family, we often don't get the same people each week. Nevertheless it's an opportunity for the gospel and we'll see where it leads. It's not the first time I've had occasion to preach and teach at Kimiagomo, so we are hoping that this fresh opening will yield some fruit.

You might pray specifically for Jeve – he's the guy from Yafanagomo with whom I've been meeting for some time now, whose understanding of the gospel has progressed over the past couple of years. Well, two months ago, he claimed to have become a Christian. Sadly, though, he continues to resist attending the Tatagufa church, which is only a 15 minute walk from his house. His reasons are complex and cultural and I must confess I don't quite understand them. Ultimately there is no excuse permissible (except maybe if both his legs were broken) for if the gospel can break down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles it certainly can between the Yafanagomo and Tatagufa clans.

In fact it's more than just that the gospel can do that, but it is an intrinsic part of the true results of the gospel, and needs to find expression within church community.

That's why (at least in part) we resist the concept of small churches in every village, for these encourage the maintenance of all the issues which separate each of the village clans.

This is one of the major drawbacks of using vernacular languages in a country of more than 800 languages among only 5 ½ million people. These languages are maintained by people for this very reason: to maintain the separation of their tribes, and avoid their being brought together.

Anyway, Jeve needs help in understanding the importance of meeting with other believers and demonstrating the uniting results of the gospel which brings us together as the family of God with one heart and mind and purpose. So, too, do the Tatagufa believers as they welcome and accept people from clans other than their own.



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Let me summarise some of the “bit’s and pieces” that make up the week so that you might have a more comprehensive picture as you pray.

↳ Work is nearly complete on the 1- & 2 Timothy Study Book for when we are on furlough and Long Service Leave next year. Out of 29 studies/sermons there are only 3 more to complete. We’re hoping Alice and Adam will be able to print and bind the books when they come to visit in January.

↳ Presently I’m working on translating the book of Proverbs. So far 7 chapters are complete. Quite contrary to nature, I need to be very “forward thinking” so that the text I wish to preach from in the months and even years ahead is translated and published in readiness.

↳ There is the constant work of preparation to be completed each week; sermons for church at Avili and Tatagufa, Wednesday men’s meeting, and Friday evangelistic meetings at Kimiagomo.

↳ We have found that hymns are a useful way to catechise. So in the past few weeks we have prepared 4 new hymns to add to our existing collection. Some we have based on modern hymns sung in Australia, while others are based on specific passages of Scripture. We hope to introduce them between now and when we leave for furlough next year.

↳ Beth has resumed the women’s-literacy classes held each week down at Tatagufa. This requires a fair amount of preparation. It’s also a somewhat frustrating job as many of the women don’t make the most of the opportunity and fail to do much between classes. There was one noticeable exception in the nine weeks Beth was in Australia – Sohele, a teenage girl, forged ahead learning almost the whole of a “memory verse” book Beth had prepared for them. (Learning memory verses is just one “stream” in the overall literacy program, and provides for weekly Bible input while reading is still difficult.)

↳ Because of the nature and expectations of our residency here in the Kanite we are seen as “there” for everyone, even for those who will have nothing to do with what we preach. Consequently, at times, we get lots of people coming to visit us at our house. Sometimes these visits give rise to telling the gospel, while at other times there is no immediate occasion for the gospel. It’s tempting to think of these “interruptions” as a nuisance, rather than opportunity for ministry.

Again, thank you so much for all your kindnesses to us and your loving support of this work.

With love,
Glenn and Beth

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