

The Kihleng Family Missionaries to Micronesia

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Kaselehlie oh Parakapw Mwuah! Greetings and Happy New Year!

As we enter this new year we see around the world sickness, political unrest, heartache, and so much more. We are so thankful that our God is still in control and knows what tomorrow will hold. These difficult times only confirm to us that our mission to serve Him and spread the Gospel is more important now than ever before.

As I'm sure most of you are, we here in the islands continue to face restrictions and changes due to Covid-19. Micronesia is still in complete lockdown with the borders having closed in March and remaining closed until now. There were efforts to bring some citizens into the country last month but the plans were cancelled at the last minute. As you can imagine, this has been difficult for the many separated families affect. Our son Kaleo is still in the States as well and it doesn't look like he will be allowed to return any time soon. Unfortunately, Micronesia is no longer on the "Covid-free list" as we have our first confirmed case, though the one and only case is currently isolated on a ship in the harbor. We had just began to see a more relaxed approach here on island with things reopening and returning somewhat to normal and the FSM President has declared that we can continue without more restrictions as long as the case is contained on the ship. Thankfully, we are now back to our regular service schedule, though we are still sharing our services online. Our youth group is once again meeting for youth fellowships and we are starting back to our Sunday school classes, though location has been an issue since we are still holding all services/meetings outside. Hopefully we will be able to resume Bible Institute classes in the near future as well. One blessing that we have seen as a result of moving our services outdoors is a large increase in attendance. The larger space has allowed for that and we now know that we will most likely not ever return to holding services in our former building. We are actively making plans for a future, much larger building and Lord willing, we will see these plans become a reality at some point this year.

As I mentioned in our last later and video update, in spite of restrictions and changes, however, we have seen a good deal of growth in the church. We have seen several saved and baptized recently and we have seen such a sweet spirit among our church people as we have banded together through these unusual times. The month of November was our annual Missions Month and what a blessing those services were! It was exciting to hear what God is doing in the lives and ministries of each of the pastors/missionaries that our little island church supports. Missionary Gabe Eiben was our speaker for our missions banquet and it was a blessing to have his family join us as well. We will be sharing some photos of the banquet and services on our blog at kihlengfamily.blogspot.com. In December we held a small Christmas program with our Sunday school children, some of the youth, and several of the adults in the church. We were unable to do a large cantata as we have in the past, but we pray that the little program

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we were able to put together was a blessing to those who came. We thoroughly enjoyed our time together working on it and presenting it to our community.

While we have seen some exciting things in the ministry in recent months, this year has also brought some extreme heartaches. On the morning of November 6th, we awakened to the devastating news that our dear friend Pastor Don Eckert went home to be with the Lord after struggling for several weeks with Covid-19. Pastor Eckert served many years in Guam and has been a tremendous godly influence on so many of the Micronesians that have attended school there. The impact he has had on our own kids as well has been a great one and his passing really affected our family. He is truly missed. One of our family's fondest memories of him was the time he spent with us after the mudslide. He was a great encouragement to us during that time and we will never forget that time with him. Another great loss was the home going of Mrs. RuthAnn Arthurs. The Arthurs were missionaries here on Pohnpei for many years, running the Christian radio station. They were always Grandma and Grandpa to our kids. RuthAnn was at the hospital for the birth of several of our kids and has been a tremendous mentor and friend for so many years. On November 27th, RuthAnn entered the presence of our Savior and her suffering is no more. We've also seen the passing of several of our loved ones both in the U.S. and here on island.

Though it has been a time of sorrow, saying goodbye to loved ones, we are also celebrating some births as well. Our assistant pastor and his wife recently welcomed a beautiful baby girl into the world. We are thankful for a safe delivery and a healthy mom and baby.

As uncertain as things are right now, we have no idea when we will be able to reschedule our furlough. For now we are unable to travel in or out of Micronesia at all. This is a bit of a frustration of course, but we know God has a plan in all of this. Thankfully the airlines has assured us that our tickets will be good for a full 2 years from our original travel date, which will be until March, 2022. Lord willing, we can schedule a furlough by that time. Meanwhile, we are working on a video presentation of our ministry and will send to each of our supporting churches since we cannot be there in person. We will also upload the video to YouTube. If pastors would like a phone call with me for a personal update on things here, please feel free to email me and we can set up a time for that. I know videos and phone calls are not the same as our family presenting an update in person, but unfortunately, until the travel ban in our part of the world is lifted, that is all we are able to do. We look forward to the day when we can once again travel freely in and out of the islands. We also have a private Facebook group, "Friends of the Kihleng Pohnpei Ministry" that you are welcome to join for more frequent, informal updates.

Our family continues to do well. The kids are a bit restless without our usual activities but we are also enjoying the extra family time. Kaleo is currently in New York City with my sister's family there. He was able to find work there for a time, but Covid intervened once again and his department was shut down. He has continued to look for work but has been unable to find anything since. Susan and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary a few days before Christmas. I am thankful for the years God has given us together and look forward to many more to come.

Know that we are earnestly praying for you all in the United States in these uncertain times and will continue to do so. We also thank you all for your continued prayers and support of our family and ministry here.

Because of Calvary,
Rickson & Susan, Kaleo, Kestra, Kyler, Katrianne, & Kaylinn