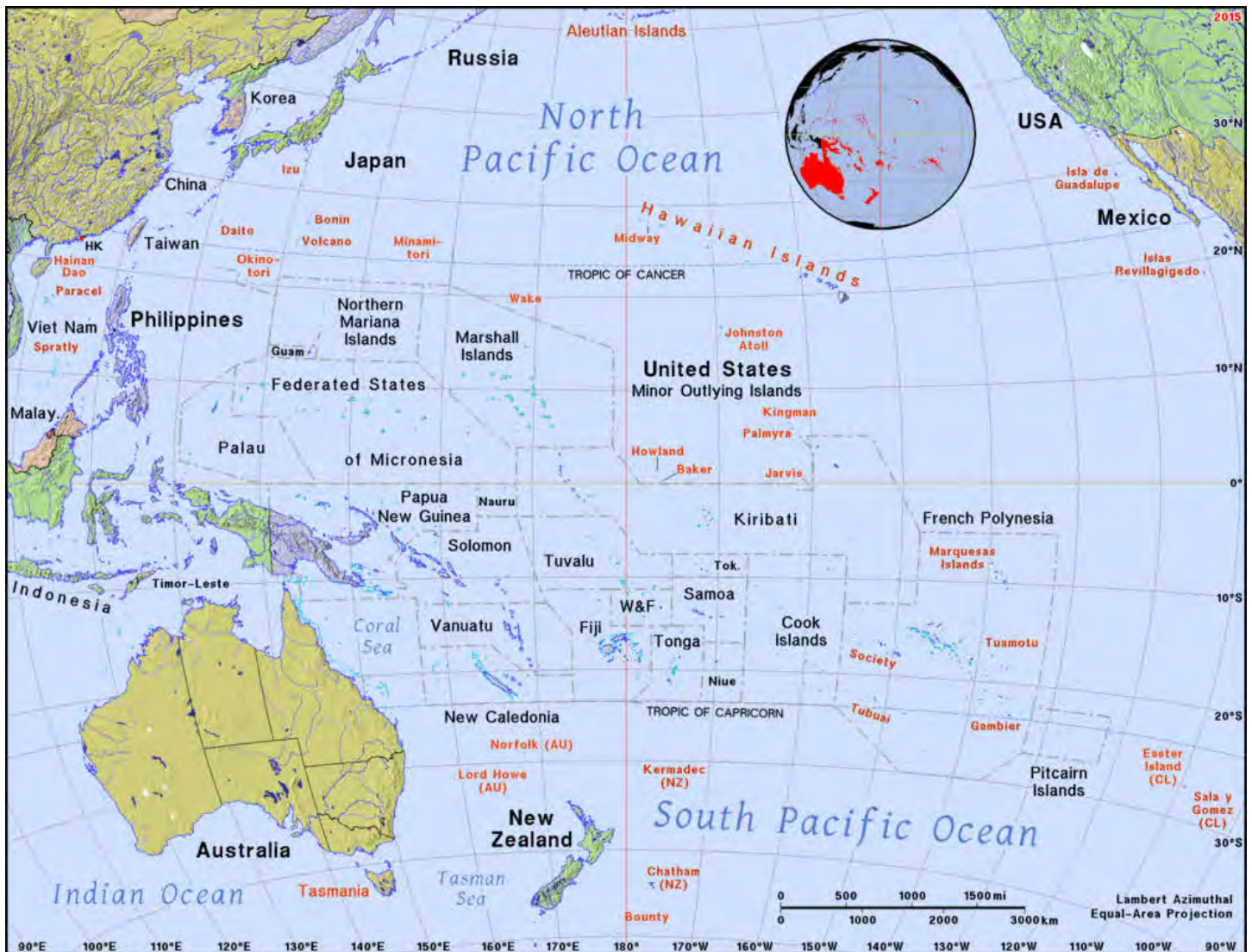


Establishing Holy Ground in Fiji

June 22, 1975

by Mary Jane [maiden name George] Despres - June 22, 2015

Forty years ago, on June 22, 1975, the three missionaries to Fiji, together with one new member from Fiji, blessed the first Holy Ground in Fiji, located in the Suva Botanical Gardens in the capitol city Suva, Fiji. Fiji is located east of Australia and north of New Zealand in the South Pacific.



Elisabeth [maiden name Klima] Heil from Germany was the first of the three missionaries to land in Fiji, arriving on April 24, 1975 from New Zealand, where she had served as an original missionary and national leader. I was the second missionary to come, arriving on May 16, 1975. We were aware that True Father wanted us to be in our mission assignment countries by May 1, 1975. Some of the American missionaries, including myself, stayed behind in America a few weeks after our overseas missions assignments to fundraise in support of the repayment of our own debts, such as college tuition.

The very next day after I arrived, which was May 17, 1975, I met Elisabeth. Here's a photo of us a few minutes after we met. Left to right in the photo below: Mary Jane [maiden name George] Despres and Elisabeth [maiden name Klima] Heil



Elisabeth had already found and begun living at our first church center, a first floor apartment on a rocky cliff overlooking the beautiful Suva Bay, seen in the photo above. Our first member was Kamillo Repagtonu, the grandson of the last chief and leader of Rotuma, a Fijian island with customs and language that are different from the Fijians of the main two islands of Fiji. When Kamillo Repagtonu met Elisabeth, he asked her if she was a missionary. Kamillo Repagtonu, his son and I are in this photo:





Yutaka Abe, the Japanese missionary to Fiji, arrived on June 14, 1975. In this photo, we're at the balcony at the back of our center, with this view of the Suva Harbor. The arc in the sky is a light colored rainbow. For the first several months in Fiji, Yutaka diligently studied English from a textbook most of the time. Afterwards, he began conversing with us in understandable English.

On June 22, 1975, Yutaka Abe officiated at the blessing of Fiji's National Holy Ground. Also present were Elisabeth Klima Heil, Kamillo Repagtonu and me. We selected the marked Royal Palm Tree of the Suva Botanical Gardens as the central point of the Holy Ground. (The grass was green, unlike in this photo.)



The three missionaries and our first member, Kamillo Repagtonu, took part in the ceremony to create the Holy Ground. Note the sign on the tree indicating that it is a Royal Palm Tree.





A pledge to Heavenly Father for the victory in Fiji and three shouts of “Monsei!” concluded the ceremony.



Bill Savu and Isabella [maiden name Vuniwai] Kado are two other members who accepted our faith's teachings during the first three missionaries' brief stay in Fiji in 1975.



A highlight of our brief time in Fiji was the opportunity to meet the kind and sensible Senator Ratu Mosese Tuisawau (wearing a brown "sulu" in this photo). He supported us in our efforts to secure extensions of our visas so that we could stay longer in Fiji. The other man in this photo was the caretaker of a beautiful former mayor's home in Nausori, Fiji. Yutaka Abe took this photo.



Here are three of the founding members of our church in Fiji, left to right, Bill Savu, Ilesia Duvuloco, and Isabella [maiden name Vuniwai] Kado. On December 25, 1975, Bill Savu placed an announcement in the Fiji Times that our church had begun in Fiji.

We had hoped to celebrate God's Day 1976 together on January 1, 1976, however Elisabeth and I departed Fiji on December 28, 1985. We were delighted that Kamillo Repagtonu could come that day to bid us farewell. Here's a photo of the last day we were together in Fiji.

