

Bistrigan Newsletter

December 2023

Greetings dear friends!

It's been quite some time since we connected, but as of the end of October, Gary has joined me in entering "full retirement". The Touchpoint Church on Guam planned a surprise party which makes retirement feel official! Retirement now allows Gary the opportunity to spend longer stretches of quality time with his mom who is 93, but it also means we will both be able to do volunteer work in Micronesia as we feel led, thanks to the standby flying privileges afforded us through our son Jared.

Now for some specific ministry updates from the past months.

TOUCHPOINT CHURCH OF GOD

A little over two years ago, a local man from Guam was identified as a good candidate for pastoral ministry, AND willing to be trained by Gary. Of course we were excited and had shared that news with you in one of our letters. He and his family had been involved at Touchpoint for almost a year when they, sadly, withdrew from this commitment. So Gary continued covering the ministry there, now totaling more than two years. In order to take a break to be with his mom and not leave the church without leadership, he had arranged for a couple from Canada to fill in for 4 months starting this November. A little later we were made aware of another couple who felt lead to return to Guam from the mainland for full time pastoral ministry. One

of our church elders had heard about this and connected with them, and after considerable dialogue with Touchpoint leadership, the couple accepted the opportunity to serve in an interim capacity for the next 6 months. At that time an evaluation will be made to determine whether or not this is a good fit for both them and the congregation. We praise God for this provision and also for the gracious understanding of our friends who had committed to fill in temporarily!

YAP INT'L CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

In our last letter we also reported that we had been in touch with a couple who had agreed to replace us on Yap starting this past summer for the beginning of the 2023/24 school year. However, back in May they as well, decided to withdraw from their commitment. This was disappointing to say the least especially after having been in dialogue with them for almost a year. So while we had hoped we would go to Yap in July to orient them, we went instead to help start the new school year. Gary reorganized the staff and went through the ACE Teacher Training program. I worked in the Kindergarten to help support a new local teacher and also joined with some of the youth to lead Sunday worship services. We also finished packing our personal things which we had begun in February. While we truly enjoyed this opportunity to support the Yap ministry we also realized that after over

two years of absence, we are not physically capable of handling the work load like we used to. In other words...we are ready for retirement. It has been discouraging to see the school reduced to half of what it used to be yet from our experience we knew that this was inevitable. There are several cultural factors that require somebody outside the caste system to head the school ministry. Non-the-less we do have some great local leaders serving both the church and the school. The future is in God's hands and we pray that by His grace, the school will be able to continue. Please be in prayer with us that this ministry will continue to function. If you are aware of anyone who might be willing to volunteer, even on a short term basis, please let us know.

Gary returned to Canada in October and I am on Yap helping prepare for a Christmas Program at the Christian School. I will return to Guam in December and spend a few more days with Jared, then venture on to Portland for the birth of another grandchild...Kelty and Kyron's 4th boy. Lord willing, the New Year will find me back in Canada to be with Gary and to meet my Alberta residency requirements.

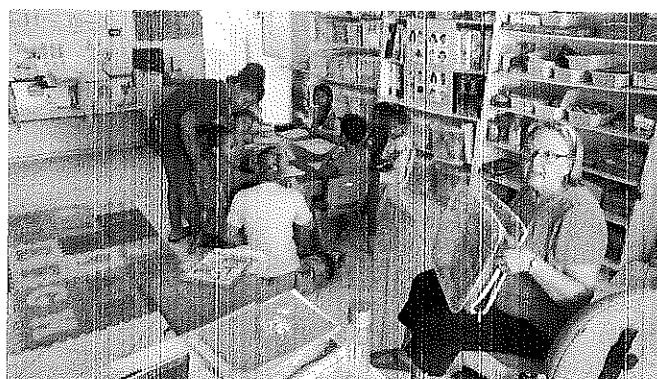
As always, we are grateful for your love and support and continued interest in our lives and ministry. Our plan to visit our support churches one more time is on hold, but still in our hearts. Though I am no longer making seasonal greeting cards our wishes for a wonderful Christmas and blessed New Year remain the same.

In the love of Christ.

Gwen (for Gary as well)



Retirement Party Oct. 21st, 2023 - Guam



Start of Kindergarten – Yap – August 2023



Yap International Christian School Grades 1-3



Sorting and packing 38 yrs of living in Micronesia