

La Réunion 19 April 1982

Dear Tracy and Ida Rose:

We were delighted to receive your letter and the news of your special trials and modest triumphs. We will address your response from us to Horare, Salisbury's new name; I noted with interest an editorial from the Times in London recently which observed (Ghana being under comment) that despite the fervor of newly independent African countries, their constant fever of replacing and obliterating every vestige of colonialism doesn't solve any of their real problems or create any jobs. I have the impression that Mugabe is aware of what the flight of whites and capital threatens to his aspirations for the country; we hope he can guide the government through the tempting avenues of blaming all the problems on Ian Smith and the whites to a more useful perspective.

Your description of the somewhat feeble level of experience on the part of the existing membership strikes a responsive chord here. When we arrived, the branch president and his family were visiting metropolitan France on vacation. He is the only elder in the branch with both a family and a job. In his absence, the French missionary couple here and our predecessors were holding meetings and keeping things going. We have picked up that role, despite the fact that our French is vestigial. The French couple don't speak English; neither does anyone else--with the exception of the branch president's oldest daughter. The incentive is great to learn more French fast. I read the papers daily, both to expand the vocabulary and to learn the things that are of current concern to the people here, and the people who are involved in the life of the community.

We have finally been made legitimate; our status as tourists expired two days ago, and our visas for Mauretius expired a month before that date. In theory, to reenter the island for another 90 days as tourists we have to leave France for some other country and return. We have learned we could fly to Mauretius and leave our passports with the officials at the airport for a few days, and fly back. This information wasn't easily acquired, since there is no embassy or consulate here from any country. We can hear an English language broadcast from Mauretius most mornings, and one over the same station at night rebroadcasting the BBC news. All the English on local radio here is the caterwauling of U.S. musical groups who enjoy the same bewildering success with French youth as they do at home.

On Sundays we hold meetings in the building the Church rents here and in which we live. On Sunday afternoons we drive to the other side of the island with a 64-year old elder of Indian ancestry and the French missionary couple to hold another set of meetings in the home of a 51-year old former fisherman. He lives entirely on government allowances in a government-owned building with most of his 11 children; one son is away in the Army. The fisherman suffers from a pancreas disorder and apparently never expects to work again. He and his wife were baptized with four of their daughters last December. Two other members from another family in another city some distance away have a car and drive to these meetings.

Imajun Ocesun  
Keraton Ialung (Isance)  
Edybo Ste-Oloffe  
Cueyru Foxa-Jea-Henta  
Dealy & Queye Iyon



The branch president or his wife and sometimes both also drive to these meetings. They are tremendous, in energy, the spirit, and everything the Church exemplifies at its best. They were sealed with their children in the Swiss temple during their vacation. He teaches in the teachers' college here, and is playing a leading role in the forthcoming presentation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; his wife is a partner in a pharmacy. They have a swimming pool, in which a man with a job was baptized last month. Another man baptized last summer with his daughter is a bricklayer by trade but currently unemployed; another man baptized last year with his wife and a daughter has left them to go to metropolitan France in search of a job to support them. There is, in addition, an elderly widow in the branch, who we bring to Church and to Relief Society meetings and often take to the meetings on Sunday afternoons on the other side of the island. She will be moving to metropolitan France in June to live there; she hopes to go to the Swiss Temple within the week after she arrives. All this, Tracy and Ida Rose, is to help you feel that you'd rather have your problems.

To balance the account of our work, we should add that a wonderful woman (a nurse who directs 34 nurses at a large clinic near us) comes to meetings with her two sons, 7 and 13. The older one wants to be baptized next month on his birthday; we hope the mother and other son will become members also. When we are disturbed by the lecturing of the young women in the poor fisherman's family by the elderly elder, we think how much more difficult the branch functioning would be without him. And we were able to persuade a police inspector to grant us temporary residence permits good for two months and we've received official written approval for long-term permits good for a year, which we will probably get next month after our birth certificates arrive. And I can now comprehend more of what is said in French, in Church, on the radio, and in daily conversation. It's coming, slowly, also, for Cherie.

We commend you both for the initiative of writing to some of our current colleagues in the field. On Mauretius, the Nortons are in a delicate situation where the Church isn't legally recognized, but some members, mostly female, have been baptized. Preston Gledhill went home a little early because of illness, and since it takes two elders to confirm, Don Norton called and asked if we could come over because they had a woman who wanted to be baptized. We managed to get our permits and the plane reservations and were somewhat disappointed when Don said over the phone that he had just learned the woman now wants to wait about six weeks. By then there will probably be another couple there, but we will make at least one trip to Mauretius sometime during our stay. The Nortons were here for a few days in January. Their visit included a tour of the island led by the couple who preceded us, and the next day by a cyclone which kept us indoors with hatches battened down for awhile. We had only a lot of rain and the need to boil water for a day or so; some parts of the island lost their water supply entirely for several days, and a lot of flooding and washing out of roads occurred, but no loss of life. We're enjoying good health and surprised at how fast time seems to go by. We pray that you will find ways to aid the hearts of those who need you, and that we will have the same blessing. We look forward to hearing from you again.

Love, David and Cherie

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