

By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines



A FOREVER FAMILY

When I first met Uanci Kivalu, she was smiling broadly. But as she sat down and her tone turned serious, I wondered what this friendly 16-year-old would share. “My story is about the temple,” she said.

Uanci is from Tonga, an island nation filled with towering coconut trees, majestic banana trees, and broad taro plants. Most of the youth I had seen on the island seemed content with life, with smiles as broad as Uanci’s had been only moments before. Tongan youth her age like to dance, sing, play netball, and spend time with their families. They are generally a happy bunch. But Uanci’s seriousness was mixed with a deeper emotion I could not identify, and it surprised me.

“I want to talk about the temple,” she repeated.

“When I was growing up,” Uanci began, “my brothers and sister and I were members of the Church. We would attend church every Sunday with my mom. I loved the temple, and I loved going with the youth to do baptisms for the dead. I would feel the Spirit when we went there. But my dad wouldn’t come to church.”

What at first seemed a tragedy eventually led Uanci’s family to the temple.



Uanci’s voice began to quaver. I glanced up from my notepad and saw tears in her eyes.

“One day my little brother ’Alekisio had an injury in his hips that got infected,” she continued. “He got better for a while. And my dad came back to church. But then my dad fell away again.”

The tears were now streaming down Uanci’s face, and the tissue I handed her was immediately soaked, as were her sleeves, as she tried unsuccessfully to dry the tears.

“My little brother got worse, and then he died. He was only 12 years old.”

Uanci paused for a moment, overcome by her feelings, and I began to understand why she had been so serious. This young woman had already felt great tragedy in her life. But there was also a glimmer of hope shining through her eyes.

“Then,” she began again, “my dad finally decided to come back to church. At first, it was hard for him. Our bishop, leaders, relatives, and family encouraged him that the only way our family would be together again—to see my brother again—would be to be sealed in the temple.



PEACE IN THE TEMPLE

“To you who are worthy and able to attend the temple, I would admonish you

to go often. The temple is a place where we can find peace. There we receive a renewed dedication to the gospel and a strengthened resolve to keep the commandments.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 113.

“We struggled after my brother died,” Uanci continued. “But my parents worked hard and received their ordinances. Finally, we were sealed in the temple as a family on October 10, 2008, exactly one year after ’Alekisio died. My bishop stood in place of my little brother. It was the most indescribable feeling I ever felt.”

Uanci’s tears were not tears of sorrow but of joy. She and her family had been to the house of the Lord and sealed in the temple, and she knew what that meant. If her family lives worthy of their covenants, they will be together forever.

As I think about Uanci, I imagine her walking across the Liahona campus, the Church-owned high school in Tonga that sits adjacent to the temple. As she walks, Uanci gazes over at the spire of the angel Moroni, its golden form glistening in the sun. There are tears in her eyes again, but she is also smiling, for she knows she will see ’Alekisio again. **NE**