

Maddie Bullock



Tonga

Partner - Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

About Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga, affectionately called the "Friendly Islands," is made up of 171 islands, although less than 40 are inhabited. The main island of Tongatapu holds the country's only urban and commercial centre. Approximately two thirds of Tonga's population reside in Tongatapu, with increasing numbers flocking to the urban centre. Tongans are ethnically Polynesian and make up 98% of the population. The remaining 2% is made up of Europeans, other Pacific Islanders and Chinese immigrants.

Tonga enjoys warm tropical weather, although the country often experiences cyclones from November to April. As Tonga lies in an active earthquake zone, it is also susceptible to tsunamis.

Tonga, a constitutional monarchy, is the only South Pacific country never to have been colonized by a foreign power, and in fact, the kingship has been handed down through many generations, beginning in the 10th century.

There are four island groups including the mostly low-lying Tongatapu group, the volcanic and coral Ha'apai group; the flat coral islands of the Vava'u group, and the volcanic Niua group in the far north.

The local economy is primarily based on agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, with a strong recent push into light industrial manufacturing.

Population: 99,000

Capital City: Nuku'alofa (24,500)

Languages: Tongan, English

Official Currency: Pa'anga

Religions: Christian, others

Land Area: 720 sq km

Latitude/Longitude: 21 14'S, 175 22'W

Highest Point: on Kao Island, 3,380 ft. (1,030 m)

Our Church Partner

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga is one the UCA's longer term international partners. The first Methodist missionaries arrived in Tonga in 1822. After a difficult start the work progressed, and by the middle of the 19th century the whole population was Christianized. Tonga was a conference within the Methodist Church of Australasia until 1977 when the Uniting Church in Australia was formed, and the Free Wesleyan Church gained its autonomy. The relationship between the King and the Free Wesleyan Church has been strong since the foundation of modern Tonga under Taufa'ahau Tupou I in 1845. The reigning monarch confirms constitutionally the elected president of the church in office.

Education and evangelism are strong features of the work of The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. While the government is responsible for most primary education, the church has six primary schools and at the secondary level caters to the needs of 60 percent of the students in three middle schools, five senior secondary and three district schools.

There is a high unemployment rate in Tonga and education is vital for students' employment opportunities. In addition, a good grasp of the English language can help students both during and after their schooling. Although Tongan is the native language, high school exams are conducted in English. Students often fail these exams not because they lack knowledge of the content, yet rather due to poor English skills.

Tupou High School has several campuses, and is one of the schools supported by the FWCT. Maddie will be at the Nukunuku campus, and living in staff housing in the grounds of the school. She will start with school Assembly and Devotions and then teach English classes, as well as support individual students in tutoring or assist with other subjects.



Experience Program



About Maddie

"I have just finished a 3 year degree in medical science, and am going to Tonga as a sort of 'gap year' between studies. I enjoy playing hockey, music and reading in my spare time.

I wanted to volunteer to have the experience of living in a developing country, and living in a completely different culture. Originally I applied with UnitingWorld, and then was given Tonga as a placement. I didn't know very much about the country to begin with, but have enjoyed learning about the country and the people.

In Tonga, the most academically capable students attend the government schools, so the Free Wesleyan Church school that I'll be teaching at has the less academic students. Given this, I hope I can contribute to the school through my teaching, and inspire the young people at the school to enjoy their learning and education. I'm really looking forward to living in such a different place and expanding my worldview, as well as hopefully making lots of new friends!



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