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On the plane to Southwest Bay, Malekula

Family Mission Trip: Malekula Island

As the kids finished up Term 1, we promptly boarded a plane to Malekula Island. We make three of these outer island trips as a family each year. Spending quality time with our brethren in their home context is invaluable as we seek to encourage and equip towards greater love and good works.

We first touched down on the grass airstrip in Windua, and then made the short walk down to the shoreline to catch a small boat to Lembinwen Village, a smooth 15 minute ride. We were warmly welcomed by our brethren there, and were later joined by two sisters and their children from nearby Milip Village. Our primary focus during these trips is simply to spend time with these Christians and their neighbors, in an effort to encourage them in their walk of faith. One of the principles I've begun delivering lessons on is the idea of *why* we do what we do as Christians, in an effort to evoke a more mature understanding. I sometimes illustrate the principle by saying that as a child I refrained from sticking a fork in a light socket because I was



Prayer Requests:

- **Youth Camp**

Our second 2018 LaetHaos event is scheduled to take place the first week of May. We will be studying what it means to be an Example for Jesus from 1Tim 4:12 ... praying for a safe and successful week together with these precious souls.

- **Discipleship Session 1**

We have confirmed that four young men will stay on with us after youth camp to take part in a new ministry of discipleship training. We hope to send them back home better equipped to serve in their families, churches and communities.

- **Ambae Volcano**

Prayers for wisdom, provision and safety are needed as 11,000 residents will likely soon have to evacuate their homeland.

- **Death in the family**

The unexpected death of a child is heartbreaking. Please be praying for the family in Etas that has been affected by a heinous crime.

Prayer Updates:

- **New babies**

Meriam (Etas) and Kathy (Vila) both welcomed healthy baby girls this month...first children for both couples. We are excited for them, and praise God for his blessing.

- **Fundraising**

To learn more about special funding opportunities in relation to our ministry, please visit missionvanuatu.com/fundraising.

instructed not to and feared the punishment I might receive for disobeying (i.e. immaturity), but as I matured I refrained because I understood the inherent danger in conducting electricity. It seems that some Christians get stuck in an immature state of mere obedience, without ever fully engaging their hearts and minds, and thereby miss out on benefitting from the purpose of our beliefs and actions.

Midway through the trip we made the 3+ hour voyage up the western coast of Malekula Island, settling in Tulwei Village, which was our family home from 2011-2013. We were disappointed to learn that our house there had been broken into the week before (our walls are made of woven strips of bamboo, so not entirely secure), and our solar array, some tools, and a machete were stolen. We were also able to see first hand some of the damage done during the most recent cyclone, including many downed trees (one of which fell on the corner of the church building there, causing some serious damage to the roof and walls).

We always feel like we are going back home when we visit Tulwei, and this time was no different. We were especially grateful for another opportunity to be with Minnie, an elderly Christian woman that has been homebound for several months due to declining health. You will not meet a more faithful Christian. The church held a devotional at her house one evening while we were there, by which she seemed very encouraged. The times of visiting, study, worship, and fellowship were sweet throughout the entire stay.

We remind you that you're always invited to stay up to date with our comings and goings at our [Facebook page](#).



Church devo at Minnie's house

Devastating news on two fronts

We've known of the increased activity of the volcano on Ambae Island for over a year, but recent eruptions have caused significant amounts of volcanic ash (think fine grains of black sand) to blanket the island ... destroying crops, collapsing houses, contaminating water supplies, and hindering breathing. It is evident that the island's 11,000 population will have to be permanently evacuated, as there is no clean water, no way to harvest food or care for livestock, and the air is dangerous. We've recently sent \$1,000 worth of food and water for the local brethren to distribute in the meantime, using funds that were donated specifically for that purpose. Not only are the locals facing this hardship, but it will be greatly compounded by having to leave their custom land for an as yet undetermined amount of time. This is a great loss to them. Please be praying.



Collapsed church building



Gardens covered in sandy ash



Food supplies shipped

Secondly, we found ourselves exhausted, both physically and emotionally, after one of the toughest weeks of our life. Early Wednesday morning, little Florence's lifeless body was found on the road. She was the 6 year old daughter of members of the congregation we work with here in Etas. She was unknowingly taken from their house sometime between 2-5am. A doctor flew in from Fiji to perform an autopsy at the direction of the court. His findings were absolutely gut-wrenching and too graphic to share. An extended family member is in custody. Because of the nature of her death, her body was not released until Saturday morning, when the family was finally able to leave the hospital mortuary and lay Florence's body to rest. At the graveside service, her uncles and I attempted to speak some words of comfort to those gathered.

As we sat with the family each day, we felt such heaviness and grief. Funerals and the customs surrounding death in Vanuatu are intense under normal circumstances, but when a little one is stolen away from us in such a horrific way, it makes it even more so. We continue to be comforted by the assurance that Florence is safe now. She is happy in the arms of our Savior. The loss has been mourned greatly by all who knew and loved her, but we have all been encouraged by the family's enduring faith during this time of unspeakable grief and sorrow, and comforted by the outpouring of love that has been shown by the church and the larger community.



Waiting for burial: due to custom, the family cannot leave the body alone and therefore many stayed at the hospital for three days [top] until the body was finally released and funeral conducted [bottom]