

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

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Team Update

Aaron's two-week trip to teach Pacific Islands Bible College courses in Tanna was a success. He reports that a total of 25 local students attended at least one class, 13 of which passed both classes (which were "How to Study the Bible" and "Philemon, James & Jude"). This was the first time PIBC courses have been taught there. He returned safely to the States, where Kaela and Melia recently started their new school year.

Mike's month was consumed with putting the finishing touches on the meeting place with the brethren in Shark Bay. He was forced to take a few days off after stepping on a bag of nails and having one pierce his foot - the sore got infected. He is glad to report that the structure is now usable and will be an asset for the church.

✘ Instolem Sola ✘

Though neither word is actually indigenous to the Bislama language, "instolem sola" (i.e. install solar) is a phrase with which I have become well-acquainted. Since I "installed" the solar panel system at our house in early 2010 (which involved little more than "connect the red wire to the red receptacle and the black wire to the black receptacle, repeat..."), I became known as the resident solar electrician in the area. I was presented with two more projects this month (now bringing the total to five). Not only do I enjoy the work, I also appreciate getting to know some locals that I otherwise might not have the opportunity to meet.

RETURN TO SWB

Since establishing a new congregation in Lembinwen Village (Southwest Bay, Malekula) last month, it has become a priority to return each month to encourage and strengthen the young Christians there.

Our family made another trip at the end of August to visit Aiel and Nancy. They continue to be very excited about their newfound faith and eager to share the truth with others. We spent the majority of our time together answering their questions, visiting about the Christian life, and enjoying some genuine Christian fellowship. Though we have only known them for a short amount of time, we feel an amazing connection with this family.



A highlight of this month's trip was studying with and baptizing Aiel's sister, Lius (pronounced "lee-oos"). She has a very unique story. When Lius was about 13 years old, she had a severe boil on the inside of her upper leg that required lancing. As the boil healed, her entire leg slowly began to lose feeling and progressively got worse. At first she merely had a slight limp, then a very pronounced limp, and ultimately required the use of a walking stick (unable to put any weight on the leg). After several years of the walking stick's assistance, she began sitting more and walking less, to the point that she quit walking altogether. It appears that this entire process took about 30 years. After several years of dragging herself around (no longer standing up at all), she began laying down more and sitting up less. About three years ago she became totally bed-ridden and has lost control of her entire body except for her right hand, neck and head. Aiel, Nancy and their son, Jansen, have become her full-time care givers.

I must admit that I have had an uneasy feeling since I heard about her during our first trip - Aiel had asked us to go in and pray with her, but other than that I had no interaction with her at all. Can you imagine laying in bed all day everyday in a 5' x 10' bamboo cottage with basically nothing to help pass the time? Though it was obvious that Aiel was not comfortable talking about her situation, I felt obligated to begin pressing the issue with him during our second trip. He assured me that she still had full mental capabilities, and I inquired as to her possible interest in studying the Bible. Aiel said that he would talk to her about it, but she basically remained a mystery to us. We knew that they took a plate of food to her each time we ate, and we could occasionally hear her sing or cough, but that was the extent of it. I began praying for the situation, as I was at a loss as to what I should do. The story of Lazarus (Luke 16) kept running through my mind, and I really wanted to help her both physically and spiritually (not to mention emotionally and mentally). I did not want to be "the rich man" who did nothing.

A few weeks later Aiel called me and as we visited he said that she was interested in studying, and I put it in my mind then that I was going to do whatever I had to do to talk to her during our next visit. Thursday of our August visit passed with no mention of Lius, and so I made it a point on Friday night to talk to Aiel. It was obviously difficult for him to talk about, but he shared with me her story (as above). He was teary-eyed as he spoke of his love for her and his hurt for her condition. He and his family have indeed sacrificed a lot to care for her. I told him that I would like to visit with her, and offer to study the Bible with her as well. We decided that we would make the visit on Saturday morning.

I thought and prayed a lot Friday night and Saturday morning about what to say/do. I must confess that I was really unsure as to how to approach the situation, because it was indeed a unique one and I knew I would be outside my comfort zone. Aiel and Nancy got Lius ready and put a chair in the small house for me to sit on. She only lays on her right side, facing the wall, so my chair was placed at the head of her bed and she looked up at me as I talked. I introduced myself, apologized for not coming to visit during an earlier trip, and told her why we had come to Vanuatu. Aiel had already visited with her about the reasons for his conversion, and so I started out by visiting with her about heaven. I encouraged her to put her faith and trust in Jesus, as the One who has power to forgive sins and reconcile man to God. I have no doubt that Lius wants to go to heaven even more than the average person, because her life here on earth is so full of hardship. She gladly received the gospel message and stated her desire to obey. Aiel and Jansen carried her down to the ocean where she was immersed into Christ. In spite of all the difficulty she faces, you've never seen a bigger smile.





The following morning, the family put an island dress on her (probably the first time she's worn "real clothes" in years) and carried her over to our meeting place for worship. She laid on the ground on her pillow and tried her best to sing with us. She listened intently as Aiel described the purpose of the Lord's supper, and for the first time ever was a part of that wonderful memorial. Having left her house two times in two days, her excitement was evident (and I am sure that amount of activity really exhausted her as well). I can only imagine that Sunday will be a day that she looks forward to with great anticipation each week, which is a good lesson for us all.

I would encourage you take a moment and thank God for your physical abilities, and reevaluate how you might be able to better serve Him each day. If only we all felt a sense of discomfort here on earth, as a daily reminder that this world is not my home!

NEW CHRISTIAN IN TULWEI VILLAGE (BY SHAWNDA)

Becky [red shirt, center of photo] has been a part of public Bible studies, Sunday morning assemblies and ladies fellowships for several months now. She began attending right before we headed back to the States in January of this year. She is about 22 years old, not married and lives with her parents.

Unfortunately over a year ago when she expressed her desire to start following Williamson and Massi (Christian neighbors) to worship and Bible study, but her parents did not approve. She obeyed them at first by not going, but still had the desire and prayed that God would open the door and give her strength to stand up to them and do what she felt was right. So after talking with Williamson and Massi over the next several months and asking the church to pray for her, she finally told her mother & father that even though they were "in charge" of her physically, they weren't the "boss" of her soul. She said, "I really want to go with them and study the

Bible. Will you please let me do this?" They reluctantly agreed, so she started coming. She rarely missed an opportunity to gather with the church.

When we arrived in Malekula in June, Eric encouraged me to ask her if she wanted to have a "private" study to have a chance to hear and obey the gospel. She agreed, and we actually had another young lady (Eva) join the study as well (she has also visited Bible studies/worship off and on). After several weeks of studying, Becky decided she was ready to obey the gospel and was baptized into Christ. We all walked down to the river and listened as she made the good confession, declaring

Jesus as the Son of God and naming Him the Master of her life. It was a precious moment seeing this young lady, whom we had already come to love, put on Christ and be added to His body.

Please pray for Becky and for Eva as we will continue to study with them in the coming months.



PAYING THE PRICE

Our family had a new experience this month, as we witnessed the custom ceremony involving one family paying a bride price. The bride is the last-born sister to Flexon and Alsen (and they graciously include me as one of their brothers as well). As with all such ceremonies in Vanuatu, it was an all day affair..



Members of the family and community donate 1kg bags of rice for the feast.

Firewood is cut and stacked in preparation of cooking lots of rice and meat.

A LOT of rice is needed, so the firewood is spread out with re-bar placed on top to cook several pots at once.

They line wheelbarrows with banana leaves and fill up 4 or 5 with rice.



Once the group arrives, the father of the man places the cash on four sticks.

Once complete, the brothers of the bride count the money to make sure it's all there.

The bride and her attendant cover themselves with a blanket as the groom passes the money to the brothers.

The bride's family gives the man a gift of yams and a freshly cut cow leg (tail still attached).



PICS FROM THE MONTH



Playing in an outrigger canoe on the beach in Southwest Bay, Malekula



Lexi being like daddy working at her desk, complete with a “laptop” (book), Nalgene, Bible, and iPod.



From the “only in Vanuatu” category: Lexi was very intrigued by the baby flying-fox (bat) Jansen captured in SWB. He will feed it until it’s full grown, and then it’s dinner. Any takers?

