

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

email: brandell@missionvanuatu.com

blog: www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com



Team Update

The Bakers bid Tanna a tear-filled farewell this month. While they have every intention of making followup trips to Tanna as often as their new Stateside schedule allows, they had to say goodbye to their home of 12 months. They accomplished a lot in 2011, and we believe the fruit will continue to be born for years to come as a result.

Mike returned from the States rejuvenated and recharged. He has lots planned for Santo in 2012, and asks that we pray that he will be able to find some individuals in town around whom the church can be built. Good local leadership is so important to the life and growth of the church.

Our team thoroughly enjoyed spending time together in Vila this month, our last such opportunity for the foreseeable future.

✘ Tankiu Tumas ✘

As we come to the end of another year, we say “tankiu tumas” (thank you too much) to all of you who support our work in Vanuatu. Whether it be financially, prayerfully, thoughtfully, physically, or otherwise - we love and appreciate you very much. We are honored that you have allowed God to work through you in 2011, and look forward with great anticipation to 2012!

SAYING GOODBYE

MALEKULA~ You'll recall that I reported on most of our teaching work in last month's report, but will share a little about a few of the village activities we took part in this month.

On December 1st we enjoyed the village's school-closing ceremonies (as we are on a calendar-year schedule here). I mentioned this activity last month, but wanted to include this photo. How long did it take you to find Alexis?!? Haha.



We also had the opportunity to play a small part in a custom ceremony in the village. Four of “our boys” underwent their circumcision ceremony this month. Titus and I went and visited them in their “discreet, remote location” a couple of days after the procedure, and then enjoyed welcoming them back to the village a week later with cake and laplap - what a combination!

A few months ago, I contacted one of our supporting congregations with the opportunity to supply the kids of the Tulwei congregation with children’s Bibles. It was exciting to be able to pass those books out to a very enraptured crowd (we wrapped the Bibles as Christmas presents). As a general rule, the kids in the village don’t have a lot of books or toys, and they really latch onto picture books - even the teens and adults were eager to have a look at the vivid pictures and read the stories. We hope that these Bibles will be a source of information and encouragement for years to come.

We said goodbye to Malekula on the 12th of this month. Shawnda and Alexis actually went back to Vila a few days early, in order to take part in the annual Efate women’s Christmas party. She reports that everyone present had fun and that everyone was encouraged by the time together. A weekend in the village without Shawnda made my life a bit crazy, especially since our gas-fridge ran out of gas on Friday - thus no fresh meat. Cooking for Titus and myself was interesting to say the least. Although, one night he looked up at me and said, “Dad, thanks for cooking this yummy dinner for me” so apparently it wasn’t too bad.



Posing with their kindly teachers



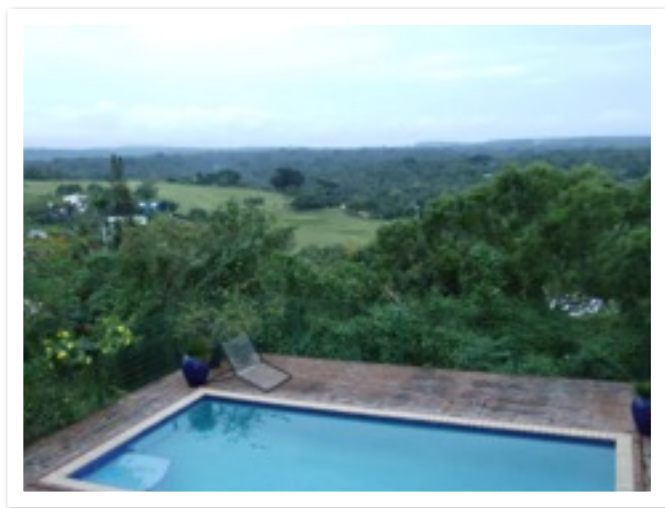
Wesly, Aisly, Bronsly and Rensly cutting their celebratory circumcision cake ~ pardon the pun :)



“Merry Christmas” to the kids in Tulwei Village, and “Thank you very much” to the Cherry Vista congregation in Denver, CO.

VILA~ In Vila, the craziness really began. Titus and I arrived on Monday afternoon, and our big garage sale with the Bakers was scheduled for that Friday and Saturday. I had sent ads for the newspaper classifieds and grocery store notice-board with Shawnda, so we began getting calls from interested parties on Monday. We quickly amassed piles everywhere, labeled: shipping to the States (with the Bakers), taking to the States (on the airplane), sell, shipping to Malekula, taking to Malekula, or storing in Vila. After several late nights, and lots of explaining to the kids (“why are you selling all my toys?!?”), we had quite a successful sale - got rid of stuff and made some money. We ended up taking everything we had left to Etas Village and selling everything at a greatly reduced rate (several things going for free). It was a mutual blessing - as the locals got some good stuff for cheap/free, and we were able to get rid of our leftovers without having to just throw it away.

With no bed, kitchen table, etc., we were grateful for the opportunity to house-sit for some friends who had returned to Australia for Christmas. They live at the top of Elluk Hill in Vila, which meant nice ocean breezes and a beautiful view. Their swimming pool also helped us stay cool (December is the start of summer in the southern hemisphere). We certainly enjoyed our stay, but saying goodbye to our house of almost 7 years was a bit surreal. Nonetheless, we are looking forward to all that the future holds for us.



As mentioned before, the whole team was together again in Vila for Christmas. We did our traditional finger foods and presents on Christmas Eve, and



Christmas lunch after worshipping together with the church in Vila. Everyone actually ended up just spending the night at “our place” on Christmas so that we could stay up late playing games and reminiscing. In lieu of adult presents, we decided to spend a couple of nights at a local resort as our team’s one last “hoorah” in Vanuatu. Kakula Island was originally purchased by a group of American investors and was supposed to be a high-end exclusive retreat for the rich-and-famous. Rumor has it that they were going to charge \$10,000 per night. However, the head of this investment scheme was arrested for fraud in 2005 or so, and construction was immediately halted, but not before the “entourage housing” was completed - the main guest houses remain half-finished. So, while the shareholders seek a buyer for the island, guests can come and stay in the accommodation for a much more reasonable rate (and on top of that we got a local’s discount). The housing is pretty basic, but the food and the beach were amazing. And as luck would have it, we were the only ones there, which meant we had the entire island to ourselves. We all had a great time.

Back in Vila, it was go time. My main priorities were preparing my lessons for our January trip to Malekula and getting everything on the ship to Malekula. That might not sound like a lot, but the fact that our kids were overwhelmed with all the transition and that we were living out of a suitcase magnified the stress level by a few notches. The Malekula brethren have asked to study issues surrounding the second coming of Christ, so I prepared eight lessons on premillennialism, Hades, “the last days”, judgment, etc. I am really pleased with

the lessons and look forward to presenting them. As to my second order of business, Aaron and I got up early on Tuesday morning to load the truck with our shipment. It was another large load as we had all the usuals, plus all the stuff we want to keep in Vanuatu but can't store in Vila, plus all the inventory for Alsen's village store, plus some stuff Mike needed in Santo - 33 items total. I wanted to get to the ship early as it tends to fill up fast around the holidays. However, I didn't expect it to be totally empty when we got there - we soon learned that both engines had failed during the last trip, and the *Big Sista* was out of commission for at least two weeks. We not-so-quickly formulated a Plan B, which saw us get our stuff on the *Santo Queen* on Thursday, the day before we flew out.

We're all looking forward to being back in the village in January, so that we can slow down a bit and get back into a routine. Happy New Year!



DECEMBER BLOG-POSTS

[Happy 5th birthday](#)

Titus is 5 years old! Read about how we celebrated this exciting occasion.

[12/1/11]

[Oh, what a night](#)

A look back at a crazy night we experienced in the village.

[12/2/11]

[Cool beans](#)

How cool is it to eat produce right out of your own back yard?!? Read about our food.

[12/22/11]