



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



We enjoyed unseasonably cool temperatures this month thanks to lots of rain clouds. It was a welcomed break from the sweltering heat. We again write to let you know about what's going on with our family, and also to express our appreciation for your faithful support. We hope you enjoy getting caught up with us...

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SMALL, BUT SIGNIFICANT, VICTORIES

I must admit that I am a "glass half-empty" kind of person. I don't necessarily want to be, but I tend to steer clear of being overly-optimistic to the point that I swing the other way like a pendulum.

As anyone who works with people knows, there are always situations that are less than desirable, and I usually let these really get me down about the work in general. However, I am glad to share with you a couple of small, but significant, victories won in Port Vila late this month.

During our regular men's meeting, Flexon mentioned concern over the disposition of another brother. He wasn't sure what was wrong,

From the home-front...

In addition to our team's tradition of dinner, cake and presents...I got to celebrate my 31st birthday with an afternoon of shopping with Cindy and Fiona and a golf date with Eric. Fun!

The women in Epau recently asked me for Bible class materials. I have been using most of my "extra" time coloring, sorting, and filing materials for them to use to teach the kids. I love that type of thing, so it has been enjoyable.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays Titus loves riding the bus with daddy to go pick up TBS students. Lexi and I go and pick the boys up at the church building just before class. I've loved the extra visiting time I am getting with the ladies each week. Also, with Eric off to teach 2 nights a week, I have become a pro at putting the kids to bed on my own.

This year our family is visiting a Christian family or individual each Wednesday evening. We all are benefitting from the time spent together, getting to know each other better.

The kids and I are traveling 1 or 2 Sundays a month with Eric when he goes out to preach. Just as Titus is learning to sit quietly and be content during worship, Lexi is finding her voice and wiggle worms! Ah, this too shall pass.

We love you all.
- Shawnda





Claude and his wife, Rosemary

but recognized that something was troubling this man and his family. Claude, also in attendance at the meeting, made it a point to approach this brother at his earliest convenience. Two Sundays later, that brother stood before the congregation and confessed sin that he was struggling with, and requested the prayers and encouragement of the congregation.

Another situation arose almost simultaneously. A Christian widow from Ambae Island has been living in Vila for the past few months, bouncing between her son and daughter's houses, because she simply has no where else to go. The church was aware of this situation, and had already begun seeking out ways to be a blessing to her. In fact, Claude and I recently met with her to discuss how the church might do

so. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter her children told her that they were no longer going to help meet her needs, at which point she basically became homeless. She approached Claude with the situation, and he invited her to come and live on his property, in a house that was recently vacated as a result of a death in the family. This Christian sister is going to be living with Claude and Rosemary for the foreseeable future.

The best part about both of these situations is the fact that Claude took the lead in each with little or no "prompting" from the mission team. Lately, he has been voicing his desire to step up and be a more effective leader and servant for the Lord and His church, and he has now taken steps to fulfill that desire. Claude is also actively involved in reaching out to friends and family members who are not yet a part of the Lord's body.

Would you please pray specifically for Claude and those that he's working to encourage and edify?

TRUTOK BAE BOL SKUL

Our team began the 5th Term of Truth Bible School on the 10th of the month. Mike is teaching the Book of Acts from 6:00 - 7:00 each Tuesday and Thursday evening, and I follow from 7:15 - 8:15 with a class on Moral & Cultural Issues. We have 15 full time students this term, and each class period enjoys at least a couple of visitors. Our students include men and women, young and old, married and single, Christians and non-Christians, and folks from town and villages. What a blessing!

I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching on topics that are so relevant to the local brethren. With four years of first-hand experience under our belt, we are much more equipped to teach this sort of course. Thus far we have studied issues including kava (a local intoxicant that is cheap and oft-abused), alcohol, smoking, religious titles, funerals and fornication - all of which are steeply rooted in Vanuatu's culture. The students are, for the first time (in my experience), beginning to grasp the concept of searching out biblical principles in order to discern right and wrong. Next month will include important studies on marriage, divorce, remarriage, speech, work ethic and "black magic."



LADIES DAY IN ETAS VILLAGE



The women of the Vila congregation continue their tradition of traveling to Etas once a month. The ladies all meet at our house on Saturday morning, where a bus then takes them about 15 minutes out of town to the village. They met at the Etas church building this month, and enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship, conversation and laughter. With each passing month, Shawnda and Cindy continue to see much growth and maturity in these Christian sisters.



Christians throughout the entire country also continue to benefit from the monthly publication, *Yumi Ol Mama*, in which Cindy and Shawnda give biblical principles on issues that affect local women.

EXCITING TIMES IN EPAU VILLAGE

The Epau congregation was started several years before our arrival through the joint effort of local Christians from Eton Village and American missionaries, which means it is one of the older and more mature congregations in the country. As I work with the brethren there, I continually try my best to insist that I have an assistive role as much as possible (rather than a leadership role). In the past, this has made for some slow-going due to a lack of leadership. However, the men and women of the church in Epau have taken some exciting steps forward this month, and we are eager to assist them with their ideas.



Ladies' Fellowship Meeting

First, the ladies met and decided that they wanted to reinstitute a children's Bible class before worship every Sunday, and that they wanted to begin having regular women's fellowship gatherings. They asked Shawnda to assist them by preparing some visual aids that would interest the children as Bible stories were told and applied, and also requested that she come and help them "kick-off" their women's program. The first few Sundays of Bible class were a bit shaky, as the teacher was out of practice and the attendance was severely lacking. However, by the third week the building was full of village children eager to learn about God and sing songs about Jesus. I am told that Shawnda's initial meeting with

the ladies also went very well, and that that subsequent gatherings have already taken place.

Second, the men of the congregation requested that our team begin teaching Truth Bible School classes in Epau on Saturday mornings, so that more people would be afforded the opportunity to attend. Last year, we had one or two students from Epau in our classes in Vila, but various obstacles kept others who were interested from taking part. We started our first course this month, and plan to meet for a total of 6 Saturdays from 8:30 to 11:30, with a short break in the middle. I am teaching a course on the church, which I taught



TBS Students



Students taking their first quiz

in Term 2 in Vila. I am especially excited to have three students from Eton Village in the classes. I pick them up each morning as I pass through the village, and then drop them off on the way back home. Our team has unfortunately not been able to have much interaction with the church in Eton due to the disposition of one of the congregation's leaders, but this effort has opened a door to assist that congregation in a seemingly significant way. Additionally, there are six Christians and two non-Christians from Epau attending the classes. [NOTE: On Sunday, March 1, those two non-Christians were baptized into Christ as a result of their studies - more on that great news next month!]



The son and daughter-in-law of a sweet Christian couple (Bob and Leisong) in Epau recently had a baby. Shawnda was eager to help them out with their new bundle of joy by supplying clothing, blankets, toys, etc. To show their gratitude, the

couple asked Shawnda to name the baby (a common practice in Vanuatu). Shawnda chose the name Alicia, in honor of her sister. Everyone is enjoying the new baby, and mom and dad have even visited the worship services of the church a couple of times since the birth.

As I was surveying our photos from the month of February, this one (taken by Shawnda in Epau) caught my eye.

While you don't have a very wide-angle view, you will still note that there is only one person sitting on a chair - the rest are sitting on the ground or a tree stump. I fought the brethren for years to see me as they see themselves - not too good to sit on the ground. However, they simply can't resist offering me a chair when we gather under a tree to catch a cool breeze. No matter how many times I refuse, their insistence triumphs. So, I've decided to save us all some time and quit refusing their gesture of kindness. I don't like it, but they sure do, and that's what counts!



FAMILY UPDATE

Our family enjoyed celebrating Shawnda's birthday this month. As we normally do, the team had dinner together, we opened presents, and enjoyed a cake (made by Cindy, decorated by Kaela). We sure are grateful for our Mommy!!

Titus continues to amaze us everyday by all that he is learning. It is astonishing how fast kids learn what you don't want them to ("no", "why not", "stop it") and how sslllooooww they learn what you want them to (be gentle with your sister, "please" and "thank you"). Titus continues to string together longer and longer sentences, watches *Cars* at least once a day (he'd watch it 24/7 if we'd let



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MOMMY!!!

him), and loves playing with other kids. Shawnda takes him to a play group once a week where he thrives. We are grateful to have this outlet for him to begin socializing with other children, and it's also an opportunity for Shawnda to get to know the moms. Following the onset of a cold, we learned that Titus has asthma. After a few breathing treatments and couple days of steroids, he was back on his feet, but a child with rapid and labored breathing will sure get your attention. We now have the resources and knowledge to properly handle the situation when it arises. Titus has given us all several good laughs this month with his new talent: preaching! He has a very strong "preacher voice," uses a wooden baseball bat as his podium, passes out the Lord's Supper half-way through, and loves ending thoughts with a heart-felt "aaaaaaaaaaaaa-men" (tilting his head back on the "a" and forward on the "men").



Titus' "Handy Manny" impersonation.

It would appear that he's in-between growth spurts, as he is not eating as well as he used to, but I am sure the heat has something to do with his appetite. He loves candy (just like Daddy) and drinks a liter of milk a day (and we wonder why he's not hungry - ha!).



"I've had enough!"

Lexi is beautiful in every way. She is popping out teeth quite regularly now, and thankfully she doesn't seem to experience too much pain with them. Like anyone with a big brother, she's a tough little girl, as she has to endure being steam rolled and pushed around regularly. She has begun, how shall we say, "voicing her opinion" quite strongly, and it would appear that perhaps we should dust off our copy of *The Strong-Willed Child* (Shawnda's mom is no doubt chuckling to herself, "what goes around comes around"). Lexi has officially been weened from baby formula, drinking lots of whole milk and thoroughly enjoying table food. She continues to sleep well at naptime (still two per day) and at night, which is a wonderful blessing for Mom and Dad! It's hard to believe that we'll soon be celebrating her one year birthday. How time flies!

