



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



Happy 2009! We hope and pray that the new year has started off well for each of you. January was a wet one, but that didn't hamper our efforts this month. Enjoy a look at our activities...

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 A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT IN VILA

We are pleased to announce that the building in Vila is complete! We took advantage of Grandpa Deitz' handyman skills early in the month and laid tile in the building. We had several long days and lots of wear & tear on the knees, but in the end it was all worth it. Special thanks to Antony Raine and the Wellington, NZ congregation for funding this special project.



After a few more finishing touches to the windows and the installation of base boards, we are thrilled to be finished with the main building. There is still some more work to be done on the perimeter fence before we can claim completion of the entire building project, but we are certainly getting very close!

From the home-front...

I am keeping busy with the kids, but do get the opportunity to write a few articles for Yumi Ol Mama and teach children's Bible class each week that we are in Vila.

I take Titus and Lexi to a play group here in Vila once a week. It's a challenge to get there with two little ones, but they always have a great time once we arrive. As a result, Titus is learning to share & play with others and has learned to say, "Titus' turn" (instead of just taking the toy out of another kid's hands). He loves gluing and painting at craft time. Lexi enjoys being around the kids, playing with different toys, and getting out of the house.

Many Christians give us locally grown crops and I am enjoying figuring out new ways to cook it. Most recently I made a coffee cake using naos, a fruit similar to an apple. I have also made sweet potato muffins, lemon-ginger kumala, pineapple mango chutney, banana muffins, and pumpkin bread. I am really enjoying cooking with "aelan kakae" (island food).

I hope that 2009 is a year that you spend more time in God's word and learn to love Him more deeply.

We love you all.
 - Shawnda





BAKER VOW RENEWAL

Our entire family enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate the Baker's 10th wedding anniversary with them this month. They decided to commemorate the occasion by renewing their vows. The ceremony was an interesting twist of American and ni-Vanuatu customs.

The festivities were held in Etas village, at a lookout point near a Christian's home. Over 100 people attended, and everyone enjoyed traditional singing, custom dancing, a colorful spread of local food, and beautiful adornment. I was honored to lead the vow renewal portion of the ceremony. Not only was it an enjoyable occasion, it was also an instructive one, as we all witnessed a great example of God's design for the commitment of marriage. Happy Anniversary Aaron and Cindy!



Cindy's parents really seemed to enjoy all the festivities, and even took part in the traditional face painting and custom dances!



Custom dancing to welcome the bride and groom.



In Vanuatu, people liberally sprinkle baby powder on a person's head and neck as a sign of happiness and recognition. After some inspection, Titus thought his dad looked kinda funny covered in it.



Waiting in line for the food.

TRIPS TO MAROU AND EPAU

Our whole family made the regular trips to the villages this month. Everyone enjoys when the family is able to accompany me on these trips, including me! The locals don't get to see very many white babies (as most tourists don't travel with small children), so Lexi is always a hot commodity - everyone wants to hold her. Titus loves his trips to the village, because it means hanging out with the big boys, lots of running, and eating laplap (he can now eat an entire piece by himself).



The **Epa** congregation continues to do fairly well. They struggle to really take off because of a hesitancy to take a leadership role by any of the men, which is very common in Vanuatu. I continue to work with the men in this area, encouraging them as much as I can. We were pleasantly surprised to hear that the woman had held a meeting since our last visit, and set up a plan for children's Bible class and a women's Bible study. They met briefly with Shawnda to seek her counsel on what they should do during these gatherings, and also asked her to come in February to help them kickoff their new program.



The brethren in **Marou** are excited about conducting a Gospel Meeting in the village in April. A group from Columbine will be coming and we will be doing service projects during the day, and preaching at night. We spent much of our time together this month planning for that meeting. The congregation in Marou continues to struggle with meeting for worship every week as the Lord's church, and we continue to do our best to encourage and edify them. Please be praying for the faithfulness and commitment of these Christians.

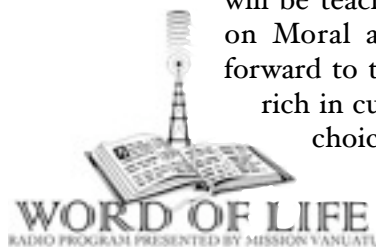
FAMILY UPDATE

One of our family "new-year's resolutions" was to spend more time with local Christians in informal settings, especially here in Vila. So, we decided that we would begin visiting a different family each Wednesday evening. We had a wonderful time with Patrick and Leisava, who had a rough year spiritually in 2008 but have committed to doing better in 2009. Titus especially enjoyed playing with their 7-year-old son, Oliver. The next week we visited Flexon and Fiona - they are two very special people, and the church is blessed to have them. Fiona, Shawnda and Lexi went over a couple of blocks to see Leila, who has also recently shown a renewed interest in her spiritual health. It seems these visits will be an encouragement for all involved.

Once work at the building was finished, I turned my attention to preparing lessons for our second year of Truth Bible School. We are looking forward to another good year, and pray that this effort will bear much fruit. Mike will be teaching a course on Acts, and I will be teaching on Moral and Cultural Issues. I have been looking forward to teaching this particular class since we started the school last year.

TRUTOK
BAEBOL SKUL
 - Port Vila, Vanuatu -

Vanuatu is rich in custom and culture, and when those traditions collide with Scripture, a difficult choice has to be made by Christians. I hope that the lessons we study in the class will equip the students to make those decisions. Additionally, I put the finishing touches on 10 radio sermons, as our team will once again be broadcasting the Gospel message over the airways beginning in February.



Shawnda, of course, is consumed with the kids, and is the ultimate house-wife. She recently volunteered to be the Treasurer of the kids' play group, but due to some miscommunications will be directing the toy library instead (I think she was relieved). Titus amazes us every day with his ever-increasing intelligence. He enjoys going through his word flashcards, and knows them all well. Thanks in part to play group and play time with Kaela, he is learning to share and take turns. He is pretending now and is also getting good at playing on his own. We have recently begun a new bedtime routine with Titus that includes singing, talking about the day, and praying. We also practice the books of the New Testament. He can say Matthew to Romans on his own and then repeats the rest. We think it's just precious! Lexi is growing by leaps and bounds, including three new teeth this month. She is trying her best to move to one nap a day, but mom and dad still hope for two. She is pulling up on everything & has started climbing onto boxes, couches, Titus' bed....anything she can get onto. She also really enjoys getting into her brother's toys. She's really fun and very vocal - She's not afraid to let you know how she feels in any situation!

We'll leave you with some pics from the month...

