

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

email: brandell@missionvanuatu.com

blog: www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com

✧ Happy New Year ✧

Our team rang in the new year with fajitas and fireworks in Vila this year. Good times were had by all. We are looking forward to 2012 and all that God will be able to accomplish through us in Vanuatu. Please be praying for a prosperous year, especially as we continue to build up the church on Malekula Island.

“ONE MORE LAST THING”

Several months ago, I went to the garden with Alsen to help him carry back food for a meal. As we got ready to head back down the hill towards the village, Alsen must have said, “oh yeah, I need to get

one more last thing” at least five times. Ever since then, the phrase has become a sort of inside joke between the two of us. It seemed like January was a month full of “one more last thing.”

Team Update

The Bakers spent the month tying up loose ends in Vila - another garage sale, retrieving various deposits, moving out of their house, and visiting with all the Christians as much as possible. Lord willing, they will depart Vanuatu on February 14, and plan to settle in the Fort Smith, AR area.

Mike returned to Santo Island this month after spending time in the US and Vila. He continues to work with the congregation at Shark Bay, and is setting up personal Bible studies in Luganville. He is currently trying to find a more permanent place for the church to meet.



Having spent Christmas and New Years in Vila with the team, and with our impending furlough departure to the States set for January 31, we wanted to make one more last trip to Malekula before leaving. We scheduled our trip so that we were in the village for three Sundays.

You'll recall that we let go of our rental house in Vila at the end of December, and thus we were fortunate that our Aussie friends allowed us to invade their place the first week of the month. It was a crazy week as we were trying to get a shipment of goods to Malekula while the most reliable ship was out-of-service.

One the Tulwei congregation's goals for 2012 was to initiate a children's Bible class program. The plan was for the "mamas" to teach the younger children and the "papas" to teach the youth. Thus, all adults would be present for each session, rotating who was in charge.

While Shawnda could have helped them implement their plan for the children's Bible class, we decided it would be much more effective to invite Salome and Leimawa from Etas Village (on the main island) to travel to Malekula with us to train the local ladies. These two women were converted back in 2006, and have become wonderful Bible teachers. They have worked tirelessly to teach the children in Etas, many of whom come each Sunday without their parents. Who knows what good may come of their hard work in that area.

What a wonderful idea taking Salome and Leimawa to Malekula turned out to be! We arrived in the village on Friday afternoon and they gave a practical "here's how you do it" lesson that first Sunday morning. In many ways this initiated the first time such a "locals training locals" series has taken place.

The ladies decided that they would meet together on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings for their training sessions. Shawnda came home from each of these meetings glowing with pride - for both the trainers and the trainees. Though Salome and Leimawa were present the following Sunday, they determined that the Malekula ladies should take the lead for the class that day.

We were all sad to see these two sisters travel back to Vila on Monday morning, but they made an impression that will likely last throughout eternity. It was so exciting to have the more mature women teaching and training the newer Christians.



Salome assists Massi in preparing to teach her first ever Bible class lesson



Leisande, Minnie and Annette learn new songs



Tulwei's first children's Bible class

I taught a condensed series of lessons on the End Times during this trip to Malekula, a subject that was requested by the brethren a few months ago. While it was originally intended to be presented in a gospel meeting format, a scheduling conflict in the village made it more of a nightly Bible class. Nonetheless, we had three visitors attend the studies, all three of whom show great interest in further Bible study.

It was more difficult than usual for us to say goodbye this trip, as we knew we'd be leaving our Malekula brethren for almost four months. It is good for them to be without us though, and Mike is planning to go and teach for a couple of weeks while we are gone.

Back in Vila, it was crunch time. We arrived on Wednesday afternoon, were scheduled to depart for the States the following Tuesday, and had what seemed like three-weeks-worth of stuff to accomplish (a never ending list of "oh yeah, one more last thing").

For starters, we took Pierre and Leana back to Vila with us from Malekula (both are members of our village family). Pierre has been suffering from severe pain for over three years, and Leana has been home-bound with head discomfort and dizziness for almost three months. Both of them have sought local medical attention, but had basically come to the conclusion that they were just going to have to live with the pain and discomfort. Hoping that the private doctors in Vila might be able to assist them more effectively, we offered to take them back and facilitate doctor's visits. After visits to the doctor and hospital, it was determined that Pierre had a hernia (imagine living with that untreated for so many years). The earliest available slot for surgery was after our departure (which subsequently got pushed back even further because he came down with a chest infection). At least he should be pain-free upon his return to the island. Pierre is not yet a Christian, but we have spent many hours studying together and he attends our services and public studies regularly. Unfortunately, the doctors were not able to diagnose Leana's problems. They gave her a round of antibiotics hoping that some swelling and redness in her ear might signal a chronic ear infection. All of her blood work came back normal, and thus we exhausted all that Vanuatu has to offer medically. Leana is a Christian, a widow with five children still at home. Please be praying for both of these cases.

The Bakers were also having one more last garage sale that weekend - getting rid of all their last minute things, and the stuff that hadn't sold in our previous sale. We added our items to that, and were (finally) able to get rid of almost everything. We also enjoyed one more last worship service with the church in Vila.

Tuesday arrived before we knew it, and after taking all of our "Vila items" (clothes, toys, extra toiletries, etc.) to some friends' house (thanks, Jon and Cathy!!), Aaron saw us off at the airport. It was surreal to say goodbye to the Bakers one last time in Vanuatu, as they will move back to the States in February. It was comforting to know that we will get to see them in Colorado in March and in Arkansas in April.



Saying thank you, Vanuatu-style



Some of the resources that will be used to teach the children's Bible class in Tulwei Village



Most recent pic of the Tulwei congregation

After members of the church retrieved several truck loads of sand and piled it in our yard (to mix concrete), Titus and Lexi claimed it as their own personal island



Friday youth Bible study

Village wedding ceremony



Happy 1st birthday to baby-Eric

