

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

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✧ Happy Anniversary ✧

Shawnda and I celebrated our 11th year of marriage on the 2nd of the month. We did all of our "celebrating" while we were in the States, so we didn't really do much to celebrate in Vila. We considered going out to eat, but since there were several escaped prisoners on the loose, we didn't feel comfortable leaving the kids with anyone. Nonetheless, we've never been happier!

TRANSITIONS

For the first three weeks of the month, we continued our transition from the States to Vila, and made the next transition in our journey as we moved back home to Tulwei Village.

Our time in Vila was quite busy, but also very relaxing. I will again

say how beneficial of a "buffer" our time in the capital city was before heading back to Malekula. We continued to enjoy having friends over to our apartments, with Titus and Lexi swimming and playing on the beach almost everyday. We also had the



Team Update

The Baker family hit the road this month, visiting congregations and family in Wichita, Enid, Tulsa and Houston. They topped the month off with a move to Warrenton, MO, and are scheduled to officially begin their work with the Forstell congregation on July 1.

Mike reports that he continues to spend a lot of time with the brethren at Shark Bay. This month they started construction on a shelter under which the church plans to meet. To date they've been meeting in Toara's kitchen, which is not an ideal location. Mike has also been facilitating plans for the upcoming PIBC courses in Ambae and studying with Jesse in Luganville.



opportunity to take part in the international school's carnival, as it was held only a few hundred yards from where we were staying. Titus invited one of his new friends to come along (his older sister works at the cafe where we were staying), and all three kids had a lot of fun once they got used to their surroundings. There were lots of games to play and lots of candy to eat. Lexi especially enjoyed getting to ride on "a real horse" (to quote her).

Shawnda spent a lot of time getting visuals together regarding the New Testament stories for the children's Bible class in Tulwei. She completed the Old Testament before we left for the States, and has now given them a set of visuals for the entire Bible. I continued preparing studies for our upcoming 12 weeks in Malekula. Something I was especially excited about was the decision to cover the fruit of the Spirit with the youth group this trip. I really wanted to find something practical, and feel like this study is going to be really beneficial (myself included). I enjoyed preparing that and the other studies as well.



We worshiped in Vila the first Sunday of the month so that we could take part in their monthly fellowship meal. It is so encouraging to see these brethren continue to grow in their faith and fellowship. They are still a small group, but it is evident that God's word is changing their lives for the better. We worshiped in Etas the second Sunday of June, which was great because we hadn't seen most of these brethren in almost six months. It's always so humbling to be with them, because they really are trying hard and have very few resources with which to work. I wrote a blog entry about the visit that might interest you at www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com. We traveled to Etas Village for our final Sunday before our departure for Malekula. It was great to catch up with the brethren there, and stop through Eton Village on our way back to Vila to visit several of the brethren. They are all looking forward to the upcoming PIBC classes that will be conducted in Epau in September. Hopefully we were an encouragement to all these Christians, as they certainly were to our family.

Another top priority for the month was getting our shipment together. We had to buy the usual: canned goods, milk, crackers, rice, noodles, and several items requested by the brethren (tube for a wheelbarrow wheel, water tap, etc.). We rented a small car for a week (Sunday to Monday), so I did all the purchasing while we had it rather than trying to get around in buses. Everything went well until the week we needed to send the shipment. There are two ships that make weekly trips to Malekula from Vila, but as luck would have it both were not scheduled to make a trip that week. We were scheduled to leave on Friday, and so we had to decide whether we'd delay our departure until we could send the shipment, or put it in someone else's care to deliver to the ship. I really didn't want to have to pay for 5-6 more nights of accommodation, so I called one of the local Christians (Claude) and asked him if he would be willing to act as our shipping agent. It was a tall order (22 boxes/bags/totes in all), but he was more than willing to help us out. Having our shipment arrive a week later than we do is actually quite nice, because it allows us to get the house in order and unpack our bags before we have to deal with all those items. Retrieving the items in Malekula also proved to be a chore, as the Big Sista (ship) is no longer allowed to dock at the main wharf. They now go to a much smaller wharf, so small in fact that the ship has to be anchored out at sea and send tender boats back and forth for passengers and cargo. The ship actually does this at every small port on the eastern side of Malekula (as opposed to just the major one, as before), which means it gets to our stop around 4pm. Long story short, the tender boats took an eternity and I got stuck with the truck's second trip back to the village, and arrived home about midnight (thankfully, the kids and Shawdna stayed home). The funny thing is, none of it really bothered me that much - guess I really am getting used to this place!

Of course, it was wonderful to be back in Malekula. From the moment we stepped off the plane we felt like we were back at home. In fact, I think this transition to Malekula has been our smoothest one yet. We did some shopping in town, ate lunch, and found a truck back to the village. Everyone was very excited to see us, and couldn't stop talking about how much the kids had grown (several commented on how much Shawnda and I had grown too, but we won't get into that - ha!). The kids were excited to return to the village kindy (preschool) first thing Monday morning. The congregation had planned to eat lunch together our first Sunday back in the village, which meant we ate with a different congregation every Sunday of June. It's neat to think that sort of thing couldn't have happened 8 years ago, but the church has grown as God has caused increase. The children and youth Bible classes are going strong (just started in 2012), and Alsen had done a great job with the Bible Club in my absence as well. He and I met a few days later to discuss plans, and he has agreed to take over the leadership of those meetings. We started our Sunday and Wednesday evening classes as well, and the youth group meetings on Friday at lunch. Being away from the work in Malekula for almost five months really provided us with some perspective of just how much progress has been attained (sometimes it's hard to see the forest for the trees!). We love these brethren dearly, and really believe we are on track to reach our goals for the congregation. We continue to pray that God will open doors and lead us to more truth-seekers.

