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A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

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✧ Transition ✧

It would seem that our family has become quite professional at transitioning to new surroundings. Most recently, our transition back to Vanuatu has been great. We scheduled a month in Vila to get our bearings, but everyone was pretty much back to normal in just a couple of days! We are especially proud of how well Titus and Lexi did this furlough from start to end.

CRAM-SESSION

We always promise ourselves that we won't, but we always end up cramming our schedule full while we're in the States, especially as our time to return to Vanuatu gets near. This trip back no different,

but we wouldn't have changed a thing. We had a spectacular time back visiting with brethren, family and friends.

We spent the first week of May with our good friends, the Moore



Team Update

The Baker family had an exciting month, and at the end of May decided to move to the St. Louis area to work with the congregation at Foristell, MO. Aaron will be preaching at the congregation, and will continue working on Bible materials in Bislama and making trips to Vanuatu. It sounds like the congregation is very excited about the Bakers' move and the work in Vanuatu as well.

We were glad to be able to see Mike this month. He stayed in Vila for two nights on his way back to Santo. He spent the weekend in Tanna, visiting the Christians in South Tanna. Tom, the first convert in the area, had recently studied with and baptized a couple. Mike reports that the Christians meeting at Shark Bay (Santo) are progressing nicely.



family in Stillwater. Brady was a college roommate of mine, and he and Ashley brought their youth group to Vanuatu in 2011. They have two daughters and lots of space, so our kids had lots of fun. We were in the area to visit with the congregation in Perkins, where Brady serves as a deacon. We enjoyed getting to spend time with those good brethren on both Wednesday night and Sunday morning. We also enjoyed having Travis, Cole, Rachel and Kalyn (the youth that came to Vanuatu from the congregation) and their families come to the Moore house for an evening of fellowship. It was great to get to be with these wonderful young people again, and to meet their families. It is evident that the Vanuatu mission trip made a positive impact on all of them. Before we left, Brady and Ashley hooked us up with a ton of clothes and gear from their store (Stillwater Summit Company!!) - we always say that they are our official outfitters.

We also spent a lot of time with my sisters during the week, as they were finishing up their time at OSU. They graduated on that Saturday, so family and friends all retreated for a(nother) cookout at the Moore house (I told you they were good friends). Fun times were had by all, and Katie and Cori are now looking forward to going back to Florida to work at Disney World in September.

From Stillwater, we made one more trip to Duncan. We were only in town for two nights, but had some last-minute get togethers with friends and lots of packing. We flew to Denver on Tuesday afternoon. Random fact, but that evening we ate at Tokyo Joes for the first time, and it is highly recommended. It tried hard to make it into my top-3 restaurants, and may well have earned a spot - YUM!

My main focus for our less-than-two-weeks in Denver was another round of Masters courses at Bear Valley - 1 Corinthians with Earl Edwards and Revelation with Stafford North. Most "Blitz Week" courses involve reading one or two books and writing a paper before class starts, attending lectures from 7am to 7pm during the week (with one or two tests thrown in for good measure), and then another paper due a couple of months later. I again thoroughly enjoyed the structured study, and am really glad that I was able to sit through two blitz weeks in one trip. It was a fairly-involved way to spend my last week in the States, but well worth the effort. It was especially nice to get to know the two instructors, as I have known of them both for many years but never before had the opportunity to meet them.

Shawnda and the kids had a fun time in Denver as well, shopping, going to parks, riding trains, visiting the zoo, and riding bikes. Shawnda, Mema and the kids went to a Rockies game, and a few days later Papa, Titus, Wayne Burger and I got to go to another. They got beat both times (seemed to happen a lot during the month!), but we still had fun being at the ballpark. Titus' favorite part was making sure that the number on the Jumbo-tron matched the number on the back of the batter's jersey (that, and the pizza ... and the peanuts ... and the cotton candy ... and the ice cream).

In the middle of all that, we invited my parents and sisters, and Shawnda's parents and sister/brother-in-law to attend a showing of "Wicked" at the Buell Theater in Denver. It was our thank-you to them for helping out so much with the kids this trip - Shawnda and I were blessed with more adult time during this three month stint than our previous 5 years combined, and it was much appreciated.



BACK “AT HOME” IN VANUATU

NOTE: the following is a re-print from our May 31 blog entry (www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com).

We arrived safe and sound in Vanuatu, and it would seem we timed it perfectly as the weather was beautiful the rest of the month (one of the primary reasons we chose to take our furlough when we did was to miss the hot and rainy season). We are scheduled to be in Vila for a month before transferring on to Malekula. This provides our family with a good “buffer” between Stateside life and village life. We are staying in a two-bedroom apartment in Vila (you’ll recall that we are no longer renting our duplex in Vila as of December 31, 2011), and it has suited our family quite nicely. It has a large open space/park, a swimming pool, and is close to a sand-beach lagoon. There is a small veranda off of our bedroom (2nd-story) which I use as my office. We have access to wireless internet (pay by the MB), which is a blessing.

Most of my time this month will be spent preparing to teach during our upcoming stay in the village. It’s hard to believe that we are already half way through our 3-year commitment in Tulwei. I think things with the congregation are progressing quite nicely. I have tentatively scheduled out my teaching plan for the next 18 months, which includes youth Bible class (taught by the local men, but curriculum planned by me), youth group meetings, Sunday night Bible class and Wednesday night Bible class. Topics include NT book-studies, Jule Miller video series, an overview of all 66 books, parables, worship, Calvinism, a tract-based personal evangelism series, and leadership (with a view towards eventually installing elders). I am very excited about all these things. I am also looking forward to the installation of our “notice board” in the village, which you may remember us talking about during our presentation.

Outside of the office, I will be getting things together for our regular shipment of goods to the village, continuing to assist Pierre with his medical needs here in Vila, helping Claude with yard maintenance at the Vila church property, and visiting Efate congregations each Sunday. Being back together with the Christians is such a blessing! Good things have been happening in our absence, which is very encouraging. We are so proud of them and their faithfulness to the Lord.

No matter where we are, Shawnda spends the majority of her time as a homemaker. She is thoroughly enjoying access to a washer and dryer while in Vila. There is actually a local “kindy” (preschool program) at our apartments, and Lexi enjoys going to it each day from 8-11:30am. She has already picked her Bislama back up as a result! Shawnda works on reading with Titus during that time. We are looking to start a more-formal homeschool regimen upon our return to the village. Shawnda is also spending time with the local ladies here on Efate. She studied with a women named Gael a few days ago, and she was baptized as a result (she has been a PIBC student for several years, and attends worship assemblies regularly in Vila). Shawnda, Gael and two other Vila Christians went to Etas village this morning to take part in their regular ladies Bible study. In her “spare time” she’s compiling visuals for NT stories (to add to the OT ones she completed late last year) for Tulwei children’s Bible class.

Titus and Lexi are happy wherever they are - US, Vila, Malekula, etc. They enjoy playing with local children (involved with the kindy or whose parents are employed by the apartments) and visitors from Australia / New Zealand who are staying in the apartment complex. They have done tremendously well in transitioning back to Vanuatu, and are REALLY looking forward to being back in the village.

We were pleased to have Mike stay with us for a couple of nights on his way back home from Tanna. He visited the congregation in south Tanna, and one of the men there (Tom) has taught and baptized two people. That’s what we missionaries call “absolutely incredible!” That couple walks almost 3 hours one way (with a one-year-old son) for worship each Sunday, and have perfect attendance. WOW!

Last but not least, we’ve also enjoyed getting caught up with friends from Australia and New Zealand who live in Vila.



