



Brandell e-Scrapbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



Happy 3rd Birthday to Titus on the 24th! We had a great November, and look forward to sharing some of the highlights with you in this month's version of our family e-Scrapbook. Enjoy ...

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NEW SISTER-IN-CHRIST

In October, Salome (a Christian in Etas Village) asked Shawnda if she would assist her in studying the Bible with her sister in a nearby village. Every Thursday for several weeks the three ladies met together in Rachel's home to study God's word.



Upon gaining an understanding of sin and salvation from those studies, Rachel obeyed the gospel as she was baptized into Christ in the Teouma River. They will continue to meet together each Thursday to disciple Rachel, and others in her area have also requested an opportunity to study. To God be the glory!

From the home-front...

With visitors and Titus' birthday, we had an exciting month around the Brandell house. My parents had their final week with us in November - lots of swimming, presents, outings, and playing on the new playset in the front yard. The day after my parents left, the Lierlys (Tulsa, OK) arrived. I especially enjoyed spending time with Earline during their visit.

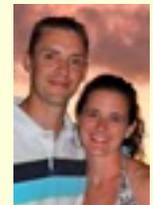
After lots of planning and much anticipation, Titus' friends came to the house for a fun filled "pirate" birthday party. I was glad the cake turned out just as I wanted it to. (First time in the Vanuatu heat and humidity that the icing hasn't run!)

Titus went to Pikinini Baebol Klab with me this month and participated in most of the activities. He was so proud of his craft and is still talking about the puppets he saw. Uncle Mike babysat Lexi while we were at PBK and said she was pretty easy to look after. We were glad to hear it. She's definitely full of energy and very talkative these days!

I was so excited this month when Rachel decided to obey the gospel. Please pray for Rachel as we continue to study with and disciple her in her relationship with God.

Love to you all...

Shawnda <><



A VISIT TO MAROU VILLAGE

Our entire family looks forward to our regular trips to Marou Village. Titus loves that we pass through several construction areas on the way to the north side of the island (lots of diggers, dumpers, scrapers and mixers to spot!), and thinks it is too cool to ride a boat to church - not too many people can say that they do that! Lexi loves ni-Vans and ni-Vans love Lexi (especially in Marou where they don't see too many white children) - so they are a match. We were also excited to take Shawnda's parents on this adventure with us this month, and introduce them to the Christians there.

One of the many things I appreciate about the opportunity to live and serve in Vanuatu is that in many ways it gives me insight into what life must have been like back in Bible times (a common market place, riding boats for transportation, farming/fishing, etc.). In John 4 and many other places we read of people having to go retrieve water. Marou Village is located on the small island of Emao, just northeast of the main island where we live. The villagers there face a constant struggle in regard to water, as there are



few natural sources of fresh water. They are able to catch rain water during the wet season, but during the dry season their only source is a well that is contaminated underground by salt water. Using funds donated by brethren in New Zealand, we purchased six 25-liter plastic containers, filled them with water, and transported them with us to the island on Sunday. The brethren in Marou weren't expecting it, and were very thankful for the gift. Not only will the water be beneficial, they will also be able to send the containers to the mainland with the service boats to be refilled. Doesn't that make you appreciate modern conveniences!



The congregation in Marou continues to face the challenges we've mentioned in previous updates, but we are grateful for the dedicated few who refuse to allow externals to prevent them from serving and worshiping faithfully. Please pray for these good brethren, that they may glorify God and be a light to their community.

TRUTOK BAE BOL SKUL

It's hard to believe that our 8th and final term of TBS has now come and gone. Two years seemed so far in the future when we started out, but looking back the time has flown by. I have been looking forward to teaching my class on *The Christian Family*, in which we considered the wealth of wisdom contained within Scripture for husband/wife and parent/child relationships. Most locals have not heard any type of biblical teaching on the subject, but have instead been led solely by societal norms. According to that standard, abuse and adultery are considered normal, and children receive little or no discipline from their parents. I

can't count how many stories I have heard of people willfully committing these sins. Even the definition of marriage itself has been skewed by traditional and denominational teaching.

You can imagine the difficulty of being surrounded by this scenario your entire life, and the joy that comes from hearing what God has to say about how He designed the family to function. It was exciting to see things "click" in the students' minds as we went through our study. The lessons were very basic and focused on biblical instruction as well as practical applications. I tried my best to think in terms of Vanuatu's culture with regard to application, instead of the American way, and hope I found the proper balance. As they say, the family is the building block of society, including the church. I hope and pray that the lessons learned will be heeded and will pay rich dividends in the lives of the students. I know that I enjoyed preparing the lessons and my study of the subject taught and reminded me of many things that I need to focus on with my own family.



I gave a quiz before each class period to encourage the students to study the prior day's lesson.

Following my three weeks of classes, Mike is teaching for three weeks on the book of Revelation. This book is used by so many here to teach error, and the students were excited to be taught the truth. Mike prepared an 80+ page commentary on the book in Bislama, which we hope will serve as a great asset to the church.

We were pleased with the attendance this quarter (Christians from Vila, Etas, and Marou, and two non-Christians), but of course saddened that several were unable or unwilling to come. In our most recent team meeting, we commented on the fact that those who have attended a majority of the courses over the past two years likely have more Bible knowledge than anyone else in the country's history. It is encouraging to look back and see how much these Christians have grown, which is yet another testament to the power of God's word - study and apply it and great things happen! We are in the process of planning what we will do in 2010 to continue edifying and equipping the Christians, and solicit your prayers as we move forward.



[Standing, L to R] Patrick (w/ Marie), Miswel, Ruth, Claude, Susan, Flexon, Fiona, Kal, Rose Mary, Daisy, Hilda; [Kneeling, L to R] Rebecca, Leimarwa, Elivsen.

This quarter it was also my turn to teach TBS classes in Epau Village each Saturday morning. The brethren in Eton and Epau have asked us to teach classes there as it is difficult for them to attend the classes in Vila. We covered *Moral and Cultural Issues* this term, and the class was very well received. I thoroughly enjoy teaching this class, as it is such a practical topic, especially in culturally-rich place like Vanuatu. It has been encouraging to hear students tell me how their beliefs and actions have changed because of what they've learned in the class. We will continue to conduct the classes in Epau next year, and are grateful that these Christians are so eager to study God's word.



PIKININI BAEBOL KLAB WRAPS UP 2009

The children's Bible club the ladies in Vila started back in June held it's final meeting of 2009 this month (it was decided not to meet the last Saturday of December because of the holiday festivities). PBK is designed to be like a Vacation Bible School that meets once a month, with a different theme each meeting. We were encouraged by several ladies who really stepped out of their comfort zone on many occasions in order take a leading role in this ministry. For many of them, it was the first time they had ever led a group of people in anything, but by the end of six months they seemed like experts. Singing, memory verses, puppet skits, crafts and snacks were enjoyed by as many as 40+ children each month.

While we had various objectives for this ministry when we started out, we especially hoped that PBK would serve as an outreach effort to the parents of the children in the community. As it turned out, about 95% of the kids who came were from Etas Village and we had very few visit from the immediate vicinity despite our diligent efforts to advertise and invite. As we move into 2010, we are looking forward to more opportunities to teach these young people about God, His word and His church.



Some of the children showing off their craft from this month's Pikinini Baebol Klab meeting

VISITORS GO AND VISITORS COME

We enjoyed one last week with Mema and Papa this month, with lots of swinging, swimming and ice cream. Titus especially enjoyed an early birthday party with them at Erakor Island. French fries, cake, and presents at the beach - it doesn't get much better for this little guy! We were sad to see them go, but grateful that we were able to spend a month with them, and comforted by the fact that we will be with them again in about six months during our furlough next summer. Thanks for a great time, Mema and Papa!





A day after Mema and Papa headed back to the States, we were pleased to welcome Jack and Earline Lierly to Vanuatu. Jack serves as an elder at the 29th and Yale congregation in Tulsa, OK, which supports our family and the Bakers. We enjoyed visiting with them for the week, and introducing them to our work. They spent time in Port Vila and Etas Village visiting with and encouraging the local Christians. The ladies enjoyed some "girl-time" with Earline and the guys enjoyed eighteen holes with Jack.



HAPPY 3RD BIRTHDAY TO TITUS

Every parent says it, but oh how time flies! The last three years have been wonderful, and we are so thankful to God for blessing our lives with Titus. He, fittingly, had three birthday parties this month - one with Mema and Papa, one with friends, and one with the mission team (and we had mini-celebrations every time a birthday card came in the mail). There was no shortage of presents, cake and fun around our house the entire month. 🎵...and many more! 🎵

