



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



It's official: hot season has arrived here in Vanuatu this month. October was a busy one, and we appreciate you taking some time out to get caught up with our lives and work...

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PORT VILA

Though the physical structures are virtually complete on the building project in Vila, we continue to accomplish various tasks relating to the church's building and grounds. This month we hired a backhoe to come and clear out the "bush" that has grown between the wall and the road. This work has made the grounds much more appealing to



passers-by, and will also cut down on pests. Of course, it also means we have that much more land to take care of each week (the tropical climate requires us to mow once a week, year-round). As we've mentioned before, Titus loves heavy equipment - especially diggers. He watched the digger with great excitement for the full hour.

Attendance for worship each Sunday morning continues to be strong,

From the home-front...

I was able to write another *Yumi ol Mama* this month. I wrote about our words. That's a tough topic for all of us, men and women alike. I am always encouraged by preparing for and writing those articles.

It has definitely been challenging having both of the kids by myself as Eric is away with other congregations most Sundays. But Titus is starting to entertain himself and is sitting in his own seat for most of worship. Lexi, on the other hand, is becoming more active and harder to keep quiet for extended periods of time! I always feel great when Cindy says, "I didn't even hear them today."

I had an unusual back problem this month. I was in pain for about a week, but have improved with mild medication and some stretching exercises.

We had a wonderful fellowship with the ladies in Etas one Saturday this month. We laughed, told stories, and even planned our fellowship for next month.

Please pray for our family and the Christians here.



We love you all.
- Shawnda



Following the tracks of the digger

averaging 8-10 local Christians and 2-4 visitors. We have a good group of “core” members who are growing in their faith. We were also encouraged by a few Christians who rededicated themselves to the church this month.

Shawnda has really had her hands full recently, as I was out of town every Sunday in October. Thankfully, all the locals are eager to assist her with the kids. She continues to work with Carol in teaching the children’s Bible class. Several of the kids have learned the books of the New Testament, and each week they learn more about stories from God’s word. It is especially beautiful to hear these young children lift their voices in song.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention Flexon and Fiona in an update on Port Vila. This young couple continues to grow and make such a difference for the Lord as members of the congregation. Flexon is in charge of assigning men to leadership positions each Sunday, and also preaches once or twice a month. He

has grown so much, particularly in the area of preaching, as a result of his hard work and the courses he has taken in Truth Bible School and Pacific Islands Bible College. We can always count on Fiona to be present for ladies’ functions, and she herself has proven to be an excellent student of the Word. Please be praying for this young couple - that they might have many, many years of faithful service to the Lord’s church.

PLANNING IN EPAU VILLAGE

I mentioned in our last report that I had conducted a sort of interview with the Christians during last month’s visit to Epau. I asked questions aimed at encouraging them to consider how they might rekindle the congregation’s “fire” for the Lord, and also asked if there were programs they felt I could champion that would help them reach their spiritual goals.

Our entire family returned to Epau Village this month. I preached during the morning assembly, and after lunch I gave each of the Christians a 4-page outline of their answers and my suggestions, based on the interviews. They provided several good suggestions, and I did my best to help them understand how to enact those ideas. I emphasized that ideas and suggestions were key, but that they were going to have to work hard to make them a reality. I will continue working with the congregation in these specific areas, the end of which will hopefully be a stronger and more vibrant congregation for the Lord. Please be praying that we will reach that goal.

Titus especially enjoys our trips to the village, because it means he gets to do what boys do best - play! He ran and jumped and threw and chased and laughed until he could barely stay awake. There were three boys in particular that he was especially fond of. If they did something, he had to try. If they said something, he had to say it. The four of them provided lots of cheap entertainment for the rest of us!



VISIT TO ETAS VILLAGE



I was invited to preach in Etas the first Sunday of this month. This marked the first time that our family had the opportunity to worship in the congregation’s new location. You may recall that the congregation was no longer able to meet at their previous location because the land changed hands from a local Christian to his son. The congregation is proud that they now have a place of their own for worship, study and fellowship. The Etas congregation has such great potential, and we look forward to working with them into the future.

Shawnda took Titus to the children’s Bible class, which took place just before our time of worship began. She was very impressed with all that Salome has done with the kids. After singing, she pulled out a jar full of small slips of paper. One of the kids would draw one out, and had to do what it said. One example was (originally in Bislama): “What are the first five books of the Old Testament?” To which the young student responded, “Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament ... Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy ... these are the five books of Law.” Not too shabby!! And blessings to Salome for all her hard work!

We are very proud of all the members of the Etas congregation. The church is now about 2 and half years old, which means that the “honeymoon period” has worn off and there are some common challenges they now face. We believe that they will endure and remain faithful to the end, in spite of these challenges! Please be praying for them.

UPDATE ON MAROU VILLAGE

I twice traveled to the small island of Emao this month, to worship with and encourage the brethren there. It would seem that our focused effort on this congregation is going well. Each of the Christians continue to take small steps towards a stronger faith. It is still a struggle for them to grasp the importance of their being “set apart” and “holy” as it relates to the village denomination, but they are learning and growing. They deal with challenges that are common for a small congregation (currently seven Christians), and seem determined to remain faithful to God and His word.

We will continue to meet with them each Lord’s day throughout the rest of the year. In December we will begin discussing a new plan of action with them, as we prepare them to take on more and more responsibility.



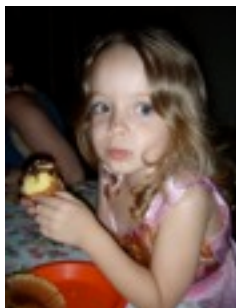
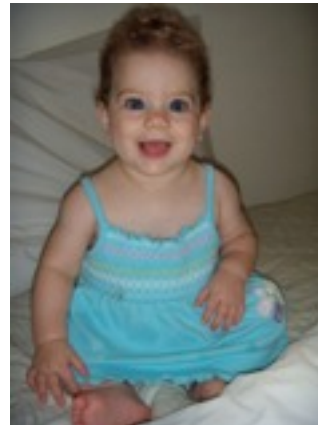
George & Naomi with two of their children - Franklin and Rosina. The family always invites us to have a cup of tea at their home when we arrive in the village. George is a very dedicated Christian, and the church will rely heavily upon his leadership for years to come.

FAMILY UPDATE

Last but not least, we will update you on our family. The Lord has blessed us richly with a safe, healthy and happy home. Titus and Lexi bring so much laughter and joy, and never cease to amaze us by their constant growth and maturity.

Titus talks more and more everyday. He especially enjoys showing off his talent of identifying things: bananas (“nana”), papayas (“papa”), mangoes, diggers, Lexi, Kaela, Melia (“Lia”), Cindy, Uncle Mike (“Mikey-Mike”), Aaron, flowers, poopy (the dog’s), sun, moon, stars and many others. His favorite videos these days are Backyardigans and Dora the Explorer (whose voice very well may be more irritating than Barney’s!). He has also enjoyed yelling “go, go, go” and “whoa!” as we watch the Olympics (albeit a delayed broadcast). Titus is beginning to be interested in playing with other kids at church and at the “playgroup” he attends weekly with mommy. He is proving to be quite the athlete - having mastered kicking, jumping, galloping, throwing and swinging a golf club. Fit-throwing has also (unfortunately) become a part of his repertoire, but we are doing our best to repress that tendency. Parenthood is challenging!

Lexi grows sweeter by the day. Her hair is always curly, especially with the high humidity, and her eyes have remained a deep blue. She is able to get up on her hands and knees, and rocks back and forth, so it won’t be long until she joins the ranks of the mobile (Kaela, Titus and Melia). Lexi has mastered the art of sitting up by herself, but we still put pillows around her just to be safe, as our floor is all tile. We’re also certain that she’s going to be a tough little girl, as one of big brother’s favorite activities is “steam rolling” his little sister. Usually she just flinches and keeps right on playing.



A funny story:

One night, as I was trying to get Titus to cooperate after his bath, I attempted to interest him by showing that he had Mickey Mouse on the front of his diaper. He was excited to learn that “Peek-a-boo” (his pronunciation) was right there on his diaper.

Half way through the next day his memory was prompted. ***All of a sudden he pulled down his pants and yelled, “p e e k - a - b o o !”*** Thankfully it was just us, and we knew that he was only looking for Mickey Mouse. Kids do the funniest things!



Happy 1st Birthday Melia - and thanks for the cake!