

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

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✧ Go Spell ✧

In the Bislama language, “spell” means to rest or take a vacation. Most people consider our months in Vila to be “spells.” And while we certainly enjoy the luxuries of having running water, electricity and regular internet access, this month was anything but a spell. Nonetheless, we had a wonderful month and look forward to telling you all about it ...



Team Update

It's been a while since we were able to see all of our teammates in the same month, but in October we were blessed to spend time in Santo with Mike and in Tanna with the Bakers. We had a great time in both places, as you'll read more about in this report.

We are sad to report that the Baker family will be leaving Vanuatu in early 2012, to begin a new work stateside. Because of that impending departure, it was important for us to go to Tanna and be introduced to the work there, so that we can assist its continuation as much as possible in the coming years.

Thankfully, the Bakers are planning to make several short-term trips to Vanuatu over the next few years, which we and the local Christians are already looking forward to.

WHIRL-WIND TOUR

[NOTE: Those of you who read my “Interim Report” blog post will find most of this information to be repetitive, but thanks for reading anyway! ~EB]

ESPIRITU SANTO - After a “last kakae” with our village family, we left Malekula the first week of October. We scheduled a three-day layover in Espiritu Santo, which is the island where Mike is now living and working. We had not yet had the opportunity to meet a majority of the Christians there, and also wanted to spend a few days getting caught up with Mike. Remember that, up until the first of this year, our team has been working together on an almost daily basis since we first

came together at the Bear Valley Bible Institute in 2002. So, being apart this year has been a difficult but necessary change for all us.

I am constantly amazed that whereas the town of Vila has progressed tremendously since our first trip back in 2003, Luganville (the country's only other town) in Santo has hardly been updated at all. Frankly, it still “feels like” Vanuatu. We enjoyed getting to spend time with Mike at his house, going out to eat, and walking around town.

Mike's initial focus in moving to Santo was to rally the few Christians scattered throughout town and the east coast back to faithfulness. On a good day, Mike

worships with Christians in town on Sunday morning and then travels 35 minutes north to Shark Bay to worship with another group of Christians. However, as of late the town assemblies have not been materializing. I was very encouraged to become reacquainted with Jesse, with whom I studied and subsequently baptized back in 2003 during a campaign trip. His wife is not a Christian, but she has come with him to Mike's house a couple of times for worship/study. We also got to visit briefly with Meriam, whose husband (Paul) is a teacher at a technical college in Santo. Paul and Meriam are originally from Ambae.

Mike took us out to Shark Bay to meet the Christians there, which was a pleasure. The church there consists

of two Christian couples who live together on a large coconut plantation. I would guess that Seule and Miriam are in their 60s, and that Toara and Hannah are in their 30s. The families are related, but I am not exactly sure how. They are actually from another island, and are living on ground that belongs to some Christians who are working in Vila - basically just "looking after the place." We visited, ate, and sang hymns together for the few hours that we were able to spend together, which was refreshing.

While in Santo, we also began planning for our furlough trip to the States early next year. Mike's unlimited internet connection at the house came in quite handy for



***[Top] Visiting brethren in Shark Bay;
[Lower left] Jesse and his family; [Lower right] fun with "Uncle Mike"***

booking tickets and taking care of other planning. The three days went by fast, and we enjoyed every minute.

TANNA - After a week back in Vila, we boarded another plane, this time with Tanna Island as our destination. Vanuatu has one “large” plane that services Tanna and Santo, which is the plane that we were scheduled to fly on, but due to some technical difficulties (funny, I heard rumors of everything from “engine trouble” to “the cabin smells like rotten fish”) we were unable to fly on the “big plane” this time. That meant four trips in the Twin Otters, and as luck would have it, we drew the short straw and got put on the third trip. Nonetheless, the Bakers were eagerly awaiting our arrival.

We boarded the truck and made the 35 minute trip up the hill towards Lorakau Village. The truck we were able to charter takes a road that gets you most of the way to the village, which meant we had to unload and walk the final 20 minutes to Lorakau. Thankfully the sun was going down and we were at a fairly high elevation, which meant it was actually a pretty cool trip temperature-wise.

We met a few of the Christians who live close by, and quickly settled in for the night. We shared a meal of fajitas - our team’s favorite! We brought tortilla chips from Vila and the Bakers supplied Cokes from their shopping trip in Lenekel - a treat indeed! Aaron, Kaela, Titus and I were scheduled to travel down to the south part of the island, where a congregation of the Lord’s church was established in August. The trip lasted about 1.5 hours, and provided a very scenic tour (albeit a very dusty one) of the island. Sometimes I tend to take Vanuatu’s natural beauty for granted, but the trip renewed my appreciation for God’s creation.

We were enthusiastically welcomed by Tom and his family in Yatukun Village. Tom began studying with Aaron after his wife heard Aaron preach in the Lenekel Marketplace in 2009. Tom and his wife, Margaret, have both been immersed into Christ, as has Tom’s sister-in-law, Meriam (for those of you who are keeping track, that’s the third Meriam in this report...haha). Tom’s older brother (Meriam’s husband, Antoine) is also very close to obeying the gospel. Tom and Antoine’s parents are also studying the Bible and attend worship services with them each Sunday. Though our schedule only allowed us to spend one night in Yatukun, it was a very effective 24 hours. We visited and studied with Tom and

Antoine the entire time. It was such a pleasure to get to meet these brethren and friends, and I look forward to future trips to work with them.

The four of us returned to Lorakau on Saturday about noon, and the ladies quickly got to work on a laplap. Shawnda was able to teach some of the local Christians how to make a style of laplap that we prepare in Malekula, which was fun. We shared the evening meal with Harry and Tess (and their six kids). Harry was the first convert in the area back in 2009, and is currently serving as the chairman of the village’s Rural Training Center. The Bakers live in one of the school’s dormitories, and Aaron teaches Bible and Computer there. It was wonderful to get to know these Christians, whom we had already heard so much about.



Tom is unable to get cellphone reception at his house in Yatukun Village, but he can get a faint signal if he climbs up in a nearby breadfruit tree, as he did here in an attempt to contact our transport driver.

Sunday was a full day, as the Christians in Lorakau and neighboring Loun Village worship together in alternating locations each week. We all loaded up our bags and made the 45 minute walk down to Loun that morning. Walking downhill in the cool morning air wasn't too bad at all, but I feared what was in store for us walking back UP in the afternoon sun (especially with four little people in tow). It was a joy to get to meet the Christians there. There are now 12 Christians in Loun/Lorakau, but they enjoy 12-15 visitors (most of whom are "regulars") each Sunday. Most of those visitors are

currently involved in personal Bible studies, so the congregation is on the verge of doubling in size! Included in those are the village chief and his wife.

I was privileged to be asked to preach during the morning assembly, and we all enjoyed a fellowship lunch afterwards. The Bakers really have done a wonderful work, and it was a pleasure to get to be a part of it, and again we look forward to future trips to be with these brethren. And of course, we will all really miss not having the Bakers in country next year.



BACK ON EFATE - We arrived back in Vila on Tuesday, and hit the ground running. Our to-do list included packing up our house, preparing lessons and buying supplies for our next six-week trip to Malekula, and making last-minute preparations for a week long gospel meeting in Epau Village (a hour's drive from Port Vila).

We are packing up because we will be letting go of our house in Vila at the end of the year. It's been such a blessing for almost seven years, but it is no longer a necessity. We plan to spend more and more time in Malekula in the coming years, and thus it will be more cost-effective to find short-term accommodation while in Vila rather than having a year long lease. We plan to have a big sale with the Bakers mid-December, and we needed to get as ready as possible during this trip, as we will be in Malekula until four days before the sale. We have no less than five piles of stuff: give away, sell, store in Vila, send to Malekula, and send back to the US (with the Bakers' shipment). It was quite an undertaking, but we made a significant impact and pretty much got everything into its proper category.

That Sunday we worshiped in Epau, and made sure everything was on track for the gospel meeting that week. The brethren were excited about the outreach opportunity, and we hung signs, tested the lights/generator, and visited fallen-away Christians with invitations to come back to the church. I left Vila each day about 4pm and arrived back at home about 9:30. I was glad to be accompanied by Claude (Christian in Vila) on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The theme for the meeting was "The Church of the Master, Jesus Christ," which was a series of lessons I had prepared and presented in Malekula back in June. We had six young men (16-30 years) attend the studies, which was

encouraging. I am hopeful that some of them will obey the gospel soon. Of course, the Christians also seemed to be strengthened and encouraged by the study. My hope and prayer is that they will be better equipped to share these truths with their friends and family as they have opportunity during their daily routine.

In between these highlights, we enjoyed spending time with friends in Vila, including a few occasions of English conversations and western customs! We worshiped in Vila the first Sunday of the month and in Etas the last. Both congregations are growing in faith and facing struggles faithfully, which warms a missionary's heart. We look forward to sharing more about these brethren during our 2012 furlough trip. We loaded our cargo (milk, ramen, peanut butter, cookies, crackers, Cokes, canned corn and tomatoes, clothes, blankets, tools, soccer balls, Bibles, water containers, repaired gas fridge, generator, etc.) onto the "Big Sista" on Monday morning, and boarded our plane for Malekula (our fourth trip of 2011) on Tuesday, November 1. Back to work!



Teaching in Epau Village

OCTOBER BLOG-POSTS

Kid Stuff

Originally typed in September, get caught up on all that Titus and Lexi are involved in.

[10/6/11]

Village Kindy

Originally typed in September, read about the kids' first day of kindergarten in the village.

[10/6/11]

Gud Nius Miting 2

An overview of the Tulwei congregation's second gospel meeting, which was held in September. [10/11/11]

Interim Report

A quick report of all that took place during our month away from Malekula.

[10/21/11]



Package from the States (we had more than 10 awaiting our arrival - a new record!!)



Fun with Jeremy and Jasmine
(next door neighbors in Vila)



Bible class in Etas Village



Playing "airplane" with Leimawa



Enjoying pancakes for breakfast at home in Vila
(obviously a big hit, especially since they're used to a couple of crackers or cereal with their morning tea in the village)

