

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

email: brandell@missionvanuatu.com

blog: www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com

✧ South for Summer ✧

Here in the southern hemisphere, people have to head south to enjoy cooler temperatures during the hot months (concurrent with the United States' winter). So, as things are cooling off for most of you, they are heating up for us. It was therefore a welcomed relief to visit the brethren in Tanna Island (southern Vanuatu) this month, and enjoy some cooler temperatures (maybe even classified as "chilly" at night).

ODDS AND ENDS

The first few days of the month coincided with our last few days in Vila. The majority of this trip to Vila was focused on the PIBC courses and Etas Village building work (as reported on last month). That left less than two weeks for us to accomplish a lot of odds and ends that needed to be done before our outer island trips.

One of my chores was getting Williamson and Aiel back home to Malekula (they came for the PIBC classes and building project). Williamson's trip was no problem, as the MV Big Sista (ship) was on schedule. That actually worked out perfectly as I was able to purchase and ship "the stuff" we need during our next village visit with him. Aiel's road back (to Southwest Malekula) was more difficult, because the ship he sailed in on was seized by government officials upon arrival in Port Vila and was grounded (something about the owner not paying for the ship?). That's really the only ship that services Southwest Bay, and the airport there has been closed for several years. He could have jumped on the Big Sista with Williamson, but that would have required him to get a truck from the northeast airport to the westcoast wharf (45 minutes) and then a small boat down the coast to Southwest Bay (2-3 hours), which would have been expensive and fairly unreasonable with his daughter and new granddaughter traveling back with him. There have been rumors of the airport reopening "any day now" for about 6 months. Aiel waited a couple of weeks to figure out that the airport was not yet open, but a man from Southwest Bay bought a ship (via government tender) during that time. Aiel and his family were on the inaugural voyage, leaving on a Thursday afternoon.



Team Update

The Baker family had a busy month, as they attended a ReEntry seminar in Oklahoma City and the World Mission Forum in Atlanta, Georgia. They report that both events were very encouraging for them, as they continue to adjust to their new life and culture in the US.

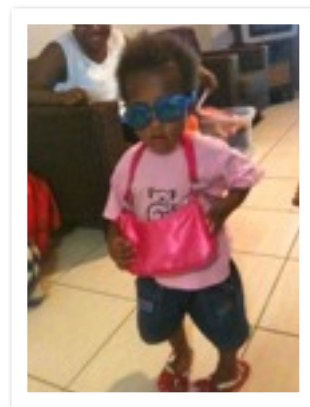
Mike reports that he and the brethren in Shark Bay are on the downhill side of getting their building finished. They are excited and hope that it will serve as an asset to the Lord's work in the area. Mike is also planning trips to Tanna and Southwest Bay, Malekula soon.

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Aiel called me on Friday morning to let me know that they had made it about 5 miles north of Efate, and had to turn around because of engine trouble. As of Friday evening the ship was back in service, but the weather was keeping them from being able to launch. Tuesday morning, Aiel called again and said they had finally reached the southern tip of Malekula, and that were scheduled to be in Southwest Bay before sundown. Can you imagine enduring all that with a 3 month old baby?

We were pleased to be able to invite the Port Vila Christians to our apartment for a time of food and fellowship. They are still a relatively small group, but we have seen a lot of growth in their lives and it is evident that they are growing closer together. It was such an encouragement to spend the evening together with them. I also enjoyed several Bible studies during those two weeks with two new Christians, Kalkot (in Vila) and Joe (in Etas).

My other main focus was trying to get ahead on my teaching for Malekula. We will continue our Wednesday night study through all 66 books of the Bible by studying 1&2 Kings, and should make it through all the books of history by the end of this trip (almost 8 weeks). My Sunday evening topic for this trip is worship. I am really happy with the lessons for this series, as I have really delved into the spiritual aspect of worship. My focus is to encourage us as Christians to worship in spirit and truth. We often have the truth part down, but sometimes it would seem that we fail to involve our spirit in our worship. Old Testament examples make it abundantly clear that God is not satisfied or glorified with empty worship, nor does such external ritual provide any real benefit for our souls. I am excited to present this material and hope that it will result in more meaningful and effective worship experiences among the Christians in Malekula. I will be continuing our study of the fruit of the Spirit with the youth group on Fridays.



[From L to R]: Lexi and her friend Irene; Christian ladies chatting before worship in Vila; “baby-Liz” having fun at our place playing dress up.

FAITHFUL MEN TEACHING OTHERS (2TIM 2:2)

Several months ago, **Atison** left Malekula to begin working in a kitchen at a local resort in Vila. He moved in with his uncle and aunt there (Flexon and Fiona). Flexon began studying the Bible with Atison, and this month he made the decision to submit his life to Jesus. His great-uncle, Jean Claude, baptized him into Christ. This is one of eight such “faithful men teaching others” stories that have taken place recently. You can read more about them on our blog by clicking on “Conversions Update” (Nov 4) at www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com.



REPORT ON TANNA ISLAND

Our family boarded a plane for Tanna Island on October 12, accompanied by Jean Claude from Malekula. The Baker family lived and worked in Tanna in 2011, in a similar way to our being in Malekula. Since they returned to the States earlier this year (Aaron was back in Tanna for two weeks in August), we have been looking forward to having an opportunity to go and followup with the work there.



A customary “welkam” to Yatakun Village

We spent almost a week with the Christians in **Yatakun Village**, which is located on the southern half of the island. Back in 2009, while in Tanna conducting Bible studies in the north, Aaron and Mike Green (Dupont, Washington) went and preached in the local market in town. Margaret and Meriam were there selling their produce and were very interested. They went home and told their husbands about what they heard, and went back to town the next day to get Aaron’s phone number. Margaret’s husband, Tom, began calling Aaron on a regular basis and took our Bible correspondence courses. When the Bakers later moved to Tanna, Tom and Aaron began studying together every Friday morning (Tom usually walked almost 4 hours one-way for the study). Tom, Margaret and Meriam were all baptized as a result of these and other studies. Subsequently, Tom’s older brother (and Meriam’s husband), Antwan, and Margaret’s sister, Ruth, were also baptized after studying with Aaron and Cindy. Earlier this year, Tom studied with and baptized his brother-in-law, Jake, and his wife, Anna. Jake and Anna live in the southernmost part of

Tanna, and walk about 3 hours to Tom and Margaret’s house every weekend to assemble with the Christians in Yatakun. Eventually, they plan to begin meeting in their own village at Green Pointe, which will hopefully be an open door to share the gospel with the locals there. We are planning to start teaching there next year.



Jake and Anna

Tom has many leadership qualities and is well-educated. His spiritual maturity is amazing, especially given that he has been a Christian for less than two years. He is very dedicated to working for the Lord and is a great example of a Christian husband and father. Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed getting to spend some time with him and getting to know him better.

Titus and I visited Yatakun with Aaron once last year, but this was Shawnda and Alexis’ first visit. Our main purpose for this trip was to come and spend time with the local Christians - getting to know them better, answering questions, and studying together. I taught a



Jean Claude and Tom

series of lessons each morning on some “Big Picture Bible Study Helps” that seemed to be well received. Everyone followed along in the Bible and took diligent notes. We had some good questions after the studies, and several impromptu Bible discussions throughout the week. Shawnda had

prepared 10 studies based on the fruit of the Spirit which she went over with the ladies each day (and they plan to use those 10 studies in a less-intense time frame over the next few months).



Ladies' Bible study

Outside of our formal and informal study times, we enjoyed walking through their coffee plantations and gardens, swimming in the river and ocean, and singing together every night. Though we were only a few voices, the sound that was produced was strong and uplifting - and they would keep singing even after our family had retired for the night. Shawnda was able to establish some really strong relationships with the women, basically spending every waking hour with them. All the Christians there are around our age, and we really hit it off well.



Tom baptizes Margaret into Christ

A highlight of our trip was Meriam's mom being baptized into Christ. She had studied previously with Tom, heard Aaron teach before, and had a good discussion with Shawnda before making her decision. Including a great uncle a couple of months ago, Tom has now taught and baptized four people.



Sunday assembly in Yatakun

We were sad to have to depart Yatakun, but excited to move on to **Lorakau Village** further north. The truck we had arranged to pick us up at 8am never showed up, and Tom actually ended up going all the way to town to find a truck that would come and get us. We made our way down the bumpy, winding, dirt road to town (about 45 minutes) and made it to town where we met up with Miswel. We restocked our supply of rice, crackers, peanut butter, and noodles, and headed for the village. Miswel was actually converted in Etas Village (near the capital city of Port Vila) several years ago, but moved back to Tanna when Aaron and Cindy came so that he could help establish the church in his home village.

It was bittersweet to arrive in Lorakau - we were very happy to be with the Christians there, but staying in the house that the Bakers had lived in really made it sink in that they are no longer in Vanuatu (and it's quite obvious that they are dearly missed by everyone). We quickly got settled in and I met briefly with Miswel and Harry regarding our plan for Bible studies. Harry was the first convert in Tanna back in 2009, and lives in Lorakau, whereas Miswel lives about a 45 minute walk away in Loun Village. There are Christians in both villages, and they rotate meeting places each Sunday so that they can

all assemble together. We ended up rotating our daily studies back and forth in a similar fashion. Thus, the Christians in this area are more spread out than what we dealt with in the south (where we were all together all day long). I was pleased to learn that they had baptized four people the previous Sunday, all of whom were family members of Christians.



Sleeping quarters in Lorakau

Due to timing and distance, the attendance at our daily studies was about 6-8 Christians, but there were 16 Christians present at our Sunday assembly, along with 4-5 visitors. When you add on the 20 or so children, it was a full house! They asked Jean Claude to preach, and he did a fine job. I have mentioned before that I am making a conscious effort to include locals on all my mission trips, and it continues to bear fruit for all involved. We had a tearful goodbye meal with the Lorakau/Loun brethren, a good night's sleep, and got on the truck early the next morning to head back to town for our flight back to Vila. All in all, our transportation situation worked out well for the whole trip.

Upon returning to Malekula, Jean Claude gave a short report of our trip to the brethren at the close of our assembly, and that evening we gathered again to show photos and videos from our trip. This type of thing is important here, because small congregations can tend to think that they are the only faithful Christians around, and are encouraged to see the faces and conditions of their brethren living in other parts of the country. We are already looking forward to our return to Tanna, Lord willing in April 2013.



Teaching in Loun



Tess teaching the young ladies' class



PICS FROM THE MONTH



Alexis sporting some "local bling"



Alexis and her new friend, Lana; Titus slides down a rock into the river; Alexis and Titus' dream-come-true, they finally got to ride "the tiger bus"



Titus and Sandy climbing a banyan tree in Lorakau

Playing in the waves near Yatekun



The main cash crop in Tanna is coffee. Antoine showed us his plantation of over 1,000 heads.



Christians in Yatakun ready to study

