



Brandell e-Scrapbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



Good times! The blessing of family is truly a great one, and there is nothing better than watching your children laugh together. Our family is grateful for your interest in our life and work in Vanuatu, and hope that you enjoy this month's edition...

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REVISTING MAROU VILLAGE

Marou is one of six villages located on the small island of Emao (for those of you familiar with the computer program *Google Earth*, you can find it just north/northeast of the main island of Efate). The church was initially established there back in 2003, when Alan, George and Daniel were baptized into Christ in Eton Village. They returned to their village after two weeks of Bible classes, and with the help of other local Christians, began teaching and baptizing their friends and family. The newly-established congregation met opposition from the village chief and other denominational leaders, which subsequently prompted the chief to "ban" all incoming missionaries, whether foreign or local.

When that ban was finally lifted in late-2006, Mike and I began making regular trips to Marou Village to work with the brethren there. Naturally, due to a lack of spiritual nutrition and encouragement, the Christians had succumbed to outside pressure and were no longer worshipping as the church. Some had

From the home-front...

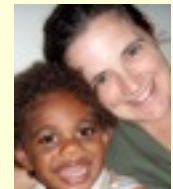
I especially enjoyed having the opportunity to prepare an edition of *Yumi Ol Mama* this month. It has taken me several months to finally "get settled" since returning to Vanuatu with two kids, but I am grateful to now be able to help Cindy with this monthly bulletin for Christian women. It was a pleasure to get to study from and share God's word with the local ladies. Both Cindy and I have so many things we want to share with the women here and this is a valuable way for us to do so.

I am enjoying teaching the Pikinini (children's) Bible class on Sunday mornings with Carol. Eric was gone 3 out of 4 Sundays this month so I am learning to "juggle" both kids at worship. Thankfully I have plenty of volunteers to help out. They are a handful at times, but getting a little easier to handle most of the time.

It has been so much fun watching Titus and Lexi enjoy each other. Titus lovingly calls her "Yecky." They keep us laughing, that's for sure.

Please continue to pray for the work here.

We love you all.
- Shawnda





Christians, visitors and children who recently gathered for a Sunday morning worship service in Marou Village

rejoined the predominate denomination in the village, and some had stopped worshiping God altogether (they knew that denominationalism wasn't the answer, but weren't sure where else to turn). They had once again become like "sheep without a shepherd."

Our team's initial plan was to visit the brethren for a long weekend once per month. This schedule proved to be beneficial, as we were able to spend many hours with the brethren teaching and encouraging them. However, as time passed they were finding it difficult to remain faithful during those Sundays we were not present. Eventually, interest too died out and we decided that we would take a break from the work on Emao Island, as we were unwilling to force people to do things against their will.

As we reported last month, we made a trip to Marou Village in August with Robert Martin and Steve Lusk, who were in town for the Pacific Islands Bible College courses. Robert is the one who initially studied with Alan, George and Daniel back in 2003. As a result of this trip, we were encouraged to renew our efforts with the brethren in Marou. This month, Mike and I traveled to meet with the Christians about the immediate future, asking them how we could help them be faithful to God and His word. We mentioned our willingness and desire to begin coming every Sunday for the rest of 2008, an idea that they were very fond of. Since that visit, Mike or myself has been traveling over land and sea to meet with the congregation each Lord's day. We have seen a renewed sense of interest and excitement during our visits. There is still a long way to go, but the church is growing stronger in this small island village. Your prayers for this effort are solicited, especially for our travel and the young leadership of the congregation. We look forward to experiencing all that God has in store for this work.



Saying good-bye as our boat departs for the mainland

REKINDLING THE FIRE IN EPAU VILLAGE

Do you ever get "stuck in a rut"? Whether it be in our physical lives or our spiritual lives, we are all susceptible to falling victim to a dull pattern of behavior. It may surprise us that even Timothy fell into a rut and quit using the miraculous power that was within him. In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul exhorted Timothy to "kindle afresh" that power. Have you ever been around a campfire that was about to go out? At that point there are two choices: stoke or rekindle the fire that it might burn strong once again, or do nothing and let the fire naturally burn itself out.

Imagine living in a small community (less than 200 men, women and





children) and worshipping with a small congregation (8-12 Christians in attendance on Sunday morning). The conclusion that “we’ve already done as much as we’re able to do” would be an easy one to reach. Such would naturally result in complacency. The congregation that meets in Epau Village is naturally struggling to remain enthusiastic about the work of our Lord. One of our responsibilities as missionaries is to do our best to kindle afresh congregations and Christians that are on the brink.



Interviewing Max, one of the leaders in Epau

In that vein, I wrote up a 10-question survey and interviewed the Epau Christians during this month’s visit. I asked questions to promote them to consider how they could 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.

I especially enjoyed getting to spend one-on-one time with the each of the Christians, which allowed me to get to know them and some of their personal struggles much better. I have begun compiling the data that was retrieved during the interviews, and am personally excited about some of the things that were suggested by the Christians. I am looking forward to being with them again at the end of next month to discuss how we can

implement some of their ideas. Please join me in praying that this effort will serve to rekindle a sense of desire in these good brethren.

FAMILY UPDATE

It’s been said many time, but it is still hard to believe how fast kids grow. Titus likes to repeat *everything* (including the things we’d rather he didn’t, of course), likes jumping off things and is most recently fond of climbing trees. He’s also found his inner artist and enjoys painting any time we feel up to the mess. Lexi is learning to sit up by herself and loves to watch Titus run wild. She’s started “talking” when she’s happy and will lay in her bed for half an hour after her naps and talk to herself. She especially enjoys watching Elmo movies.



We were all sick for a couple of weeks this month, which is never fun. The weather changed a few times which meant we were all coughing and stopped up. The kids had a hard





time sleeping at night, which in turn meant mom and dad did too. One Saturday this month, we went to a nearby beach with the Bakers and enjoyed a morning in the sunshine and playing in the sand.

As we near the end of another year (can you believe that time has come again?!?), we have to begin taking another look at our finances. We are praying about the current financial crisis that is now affecting so many American families. It is truly a time that reminds us to rely on God rather than the things of this world, which can be gone in an instant. Our family is so grateful for the financial support we have received from generous congregations, Christians and friends over the past 3+ years, and humbly ask that you begin praying about the coming year. God has blessed us richly, and we have no doubt that He will continue to do so. As we close in on the time when many of you will be re-evaluating your financial plans for the coming year, please keep us informed of those plans as it relates to your support of our family. If you know of someone who might be interested in helping us with the work here in Vanuatu, please let us know as we are in need of some additional funds. Every single one-time and monthly contribution, regardless of the amount, has the potential to make a world of difference! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

As both the Baker and Brandell clans have grown in size, the ladies have had to shift more and more attention from "mission work" to "home work," which has been a difficult transition for both as they greatly desire to be involved in the mission work of our team. Several months ago, in an effort to continue to teach and encourage women, Cindy started a bulletin for Christian ladies entitled *Yumi Ol Mama*, which is distributed once or twice a month. The ladies are always eager to receive and read their copy. This month, Shawnda was able to commit to writing the articles for the September edition. She wrote on the importance of teaching our children about Jesus and His word, an oft-overlooked responsibility. Port Vila was also dealing with a an unusually high amount of dehydrated children (due to a stomach bug), so she also included some "helpful hints" in dealing with that particular illness. Our team very much appreciates the work Shawnda and Cindy do, both in our homes and in the mission field.



Carol reading the Sept edition of Yumi Ol Mama

SAD FAREWELLS

This month brought our family and team much sorrow as two dear people departed this world. Each of them reminded us how precious life is, and that we mustn't take one moment for granted.



Warren Wilcox was an instructor at the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver for over 40 years, and we were richly blessed to have sat at the feet of this learned Christian man. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and all who depended on him for the spiritual encouragement he so generously gave.



We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Fierno, the 14 year old son of a Christian family here in Vila. While visiting some relatives on one of Vanuatu's smaller islands, he was involved in an accident. The needed medical facilities were not available, and he died due to those injuries. Patrick and Leikave are deeply struggling with this unexpected and tragic loss, and the church is doing their best to provide comfort. Please remember this dear family in your prayers.