

Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE BRANDELLS IN VANUATU

email: brandell@missionvanuatu.com

blog: www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com

✧ Weather Update ✧

I like to say that Vanuatu's muggy heat is the worst part about living in the country. I mean, there's nothing good about sweating 24 hours a day. Thankfully, we enjoyed an unusually long cool season this year, lasting almost through the end of September. That's great, because the heat is even more intense in Malekula.

LOTS OF GROWTH

As I reflect back on the month that passed, I see lots of growth. I usually finish our reports with the kids' update, so this time I will switch things up and start with them.

The big news this month is that both Titus and Alexis started attending "kindy" in the village. That's a huge step, especially for

Titus, as he is quite the home-body. They are both really enjoying it, and mom and dad appreciate the 2 hour break. Shawnda spends the 3rd hour of kindly assisting the teachers. They really appreciate it, as some days the two teachers have 50 kids!

Titus is starting to sound out words in both writing and reading. One



Team Update

The Bakers spent the month in Vila, getting caught up on various aspects of their life and work. They worshiped with three different congregations on Efate, and we able to help the local brethren through some difficult times. Unfortunately, they returned to Tanna on the same day we headed for Vila, which means we just missed them.

Mike accompanied Stacy Ferguson (Atlanta, GA) to Ambae Island to teach PIBC courses there for two weeks. They also traveled to the south part of the island over the weekend and taught in Sarabulu Village. The local brethren have been making trips there to teach, and will continue to do so now that one man has obeyed the gospel.

~~~~~



of his favorite activities is writing/drawing on a large dry-erase board. His is also currently enthralled with the crucifixion story. There's not a day that goes by without him drawing, asking questions about, and/or singing about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. He regularly asks to watch chapters 19 and 20 of the John video.

Alexis is also growing up fast. She is a social butterfly and loves to visit all her friends in the village. She is still the perpetual mother, ALWAYS with some sort of baby in tow. In fact, recently Shawnda saw her patting a leaf on her shoulder and inquired as to what she was doing, to which she replied, "it's my baby, do you want me to find you one?" Her Bislama continues to get better as well, which is fun to hear. The locals love her effort, and are usually able to figure out what she's trying to communicate. Her new skill this month is washing dishes. We have a small table where we put our dishes and a bowl of water, which is just her height.

Though we are more busy than ever, the simplicity of village life allows us to spend more time focusing on God's word. Both Shawnda and I feel that we are growing in our Bible knowledge - it is our prayer that we can study, practice and teach God's word more effectively each day. We especially appreciate the congregations in the States who make sermons and lessons available via podcast, as these serve as our main source of spiritual food when we are in the village.

As our August/September trip to the village came to a close, we finished up all of our studies. Teaching "The One Bible Story" to the young kids each Sunday morning after worship was effective, and I hope that the information has been permanently etched in their minds.

Our study of the new covenant with the youth each Friday went well. We had several visit our youth group meetings this month, and hope that the studies whetted their appetite for the truth. Several of our young people seem to be on the verge of obeying the gospel, and it appears that all of them are growing from our time of study. I would venture to say that they now know more Bible than all of their friends, a knowledge that I hope and pray they will use to positively affect their peers (rather than vice versa). They are at the age where they will begin being presented with opportunities for a variety of sins, including drunkenness, fornication, filthy speech, and materialism. We talked about all these areas

from a biblical perspective this month, and hope that they will take advantage of God's wisdom and steer clear of these evils from the beginning.

Our Sunday and Wednesday night classes on Marriage and Recognizing Sin were well attended and seemed to be effective. I continue to be amazed at the perfect attendance at practically every church event. I also appreciate the apparent interest these Christians have to learn and apply the Bible. They take notes, ask good questions, and are eager to share their newfound knowledge with friends and family.

Our new ministry of "movie night" did not spark the interest of the community as well as we had hoped, but the Christians came away from the series with a deeper understanding of the book of John and a greater appreciation for Jesus' life and teaching.

Lastly, we conducted another gospel meeting near the end of the month. There were both positives and negatives regarding this effort. Unfortunately, we had practically no visitors whatsoever attend, in spite of our hanging notices and personally inviting dozens of people. It was obvious that the apparent lack of interest negatively affected the local Christians, and honestly discouraged me a bit too. It has come to our attention that most of the religious leaders in the village have formally "blocked" their members from studying with us. That doesn't usually happen, because they are normally able to defend their doctrines and practices against others, but when combatting the truth it would seem they aren't willing to contend. However, on the positive side, the Christians took part in an intensive study of Bible baptism, and came away equipped to answer the most frequent questions about baptism that we hear. That's a major win for the Lord, because now He has more workman who can share the truth than before. Additionally, (and it may sound a bit odd, but...) I was actually encouraged by the brethren's discouragement. It showed me that they understand who is lost, and desperately want them to learn the truth. They also had to endure some verbal persecution and did so superbly. These brethren are growing before our eyes, and it brings me joy inexpressible. I love them immensely and look forward to the future and all that the Lord will be able to accomplish through them. Please be praying for open doors in Malekula.



**Local produce:**

*In our yard we have (from top-left, clockwise) lemons, green beans, papaya, pumpkins, onions, apple-mangoes and regular mangoes at various stages of growth. The pumpkins are the only crop we've eaten, but the papayas, beans and mangoes should be ready soon.*



**Ladies fellowship:**

*The Christian ladies try to get together once per month, and this month was Shawnda's turn to host. She asked that everyone bring a favorite Scripture to share, and was encouraged by the participation. These ladies are growing in their faith, and are eager to learn more.*



**First day of school!**



**Above:**

*Titus' rendition of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus*

**Left:**

*Lexi and baby wrapped up on a "cold" Vanuatu morning (it had to be down to 75 degrees!)*

**AUGUST BLOG-POSTS**

**The extra mile**

*Alsen wants to reach his spiritual potential and asked me to assist.*

*[9/10/11]*

**Work day**

*Read about my taking part in the community work day to clean out the water pipes.*

*[9/19/11]*

**All things are ready**

*Preview to this month's gospel meeting*

*[9/21/11]*

**\*Note:** We prepared two more blog entires at the end of the month, but due to technical difficulties at the internet cafe, they weren't posted until October.