

Mission Vanuatu Minutes

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TEAM UPDATE

Our team continues to travel often, visiting ma congregations with a presentation regarding our ministry. Here is an update on our progress and current status.

The Bakers

Aaron and Cindy have been traveling since graduation from Bear Valley in June. They have visited several congregations and individuals in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, California and Virginia. As of late, they have raised approximately half of their needed monthly support required to cover living expenses in Vanuatu. With much prayer, patience, and many presentations, we are confident that God will provide what we need to successfully take the seed into a ready field.

They would especially like to thank the Bella Vista, Christiansburg, Crosstown, College Hill, Floyd, Laurel Hill, Radford, and Skiatook churches of Christ for visiting with us about our mission work. They gave Power-Point presentations at many of these congregations and are thankful that they were able to discuss their plans with so many encouraging and enthusiastic people.

On a personal note, things are going well. Aaron spends each day with time dedicated to reading and studying God's Word. Following his studies, many phone calls and emails are sent out to follow up on

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FEATURED ARTICLE

-By Eric Brandell

Another Test?!?

I recently had the opportunity to fill in for the teacher of the Wednesday night auditorium class here at Columbine. We are currently studying through Matthew's gospel account, and my lot fell on chapter 15. As I studied the story involving the Syrophoenician woman (vv.21-28), I sought to find applications that Christians should make in response to this historical event. I learned something that perhaps many have already taken from the text.

The Syrophoenician woman, as her title would indicate, was a Gentile. However, neither gender, nor race, nor nationality was going to keep her from approaching the One who could save her demon-possessed child. The text notes that she "began to cry out" after Jesus. Surprisingly though, "He did not answer her a word." This did not stop her - we deduct from the apostles' request of Jesus that the woman continued to shout out after Him. Jesus again spoke, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," and was met with her response, "Lord, help me!" After hearing Jesus' domestic analogy involving the timing aspect of a normal first century meal (as today, the children were always fed first, and the dogs were then left with only the scraps), the woman showed her eagerness and faith by using Jesus' analogy to prove a point. Jesus, seemingly wanting her to so respond, said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish."

There are numerous lessons to be learned from this story: for the apostles, the woman, her daughter...and especially for the reader. Why did not Jesus simply heed the apostles' suggestion to grant her request and send her away quietly? Why did He in a sense force her to beg, plead and worship (v.25) before fulfilling her need? At first, these questions may seem

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avenues of support. In the mean time, Cindy is busy caring for Kaela, doing laundry, fixing meals, and working selflessly throughout the day. During all this, Kaela is working hard to grow, eat, and mess diapers; all of which she does well.

Kaela is now 3 months old and is able to smile frequently. However, she has yet to laugh. She did manage to roll from stomach to back for the first time this month. Though these seem like small accomplishments, they truly are strides of growth.

The Brandells

The Brandells are happy to be back home for a while! After the three-week campaign in Vanuatu, they hit the support-raising trail in Oklahoma (29th and Yale in Tulsa; Chisholm Trail, Elk Avenue and Eastside in Duncan) and Texas (Oak Grove, Cy-Fair, and La Grange) during August and September. October will be filled with trips within Colorado (Cherry Vista, Rye, Parker), as well as sending out letters and making calls to potential supporters. In November they will be back in Oklahoma for some follow-up, and also to speak at two congregations (Eastside in Duncan and Glenpool near Tulsa). Hopefully more speaking engagements will be added to the list before the trip.

So far, a number of individuals and congregations have agreed to support us while working in Vanuatu, and some have already begun sending in their funds. The majority of the congregations we have spoken with plan to begin supporting us in January 2005, and we will not know the amounts for sure until then. Nonetheless, we have received much positive feedback from everyone we have met with, and look forward to the remainder of our preparation time. Many thanks to those of you who have already committed to work with us in this effort!

Mike Olson

When you don't punch a clock every day it is hard to consider yourself as working. But raising support certainly is work. Travel, phone calls, letters, and speaking opportunities are all a part of the work of a would-be missionary.

unanswerable from the text. But before you look past the Syrophenician woman and her great faith, consider these instances from Scripture: [1] Abraham and Sarah waited a long time before receiving Isaac (Gen 21:1-5, Rom 4:18-21)...but Abraham "grew strong in faith" (Rom 4:20); [2] Later, when Abraham was commanded to make Isaac a burnt offering, it took time before he realized his son was not to be sacrificed (Gen 22:2)...but he was rewarded when the angel of the Lord said, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, *because you have obeyed My voice*" (Gen 22 18); [3] It seemed Jesus was to arrive at the house of Jairus too late (Mk 5:35)...but Jesus reassured, "fear not, only believe" (Mk 5:36); [4] Jesus did not immediately tell Philip how He would provide food for the 5,000 (Jn 6:5-6)...but "He was saying this to test him" (Jn 6:6); [5] Jesus waited two days before going to Lazarus (Jn 11:6)...He waited so "that you may believe" (Jn 11:15).

Apparently, Jesus is in the faith-testing business! The Syrophenician woman had great faith. We know this because she proved it. What is the application? Ask another question instead...Will I pass the test?

Raising support as a student, preacher, or missionary is sometimes a difficult task. Some days we hear positive news, some days negative, and some days no news at all – somewhat like a roller-coaster. Prior to this study, I was allowing the ride to overcome me, because I was trying to raise the funds all by myself. Now though, I consider this time as a test of my faith. So many people ask, "Do you think you will raise all that money?" I used to say, "I hope so," but now I say, "YES!" I plan to pass the test like the Syrophenician women did, will you?

The best part of the whole experience is meeting faithful brethren wherever I go. As a visitor, you never know what to expect or who you will meet. I have had the pleasure of meeting several congregations of God's people who love the Lord and value His work and His word. Many people are willing to take time to listen to my plea for prayers and financial support for Mission Vanuatu. The excited response from most all who hear is a shot in the arm for me as I endeavor to raise the necessary funding. I pray that my enthusiasm for the nation of Vanuatu and the work to take place will show through whenever I get the opportunity to talk about it.

My thanks to the congregations who have listened to me, those who have pledged support, and those who are considering support for this great mission work. I would especially like to thank the churches of Christ at Columbine; Grand Valley in Palisade, CO; Mountain View in Colorado Springs; Montrose, CO; Olathe, CO; Delta, CO; Grand Junction, CO; Arvada, CO; East Alameda in Aurora, CO; as well as numerous others who I am currently in the process of contacting. Thank you for your faith and love for the lost.

Special thanks go to many individuals who have contributed so much to this effort. Extraordinary credit goes to my home congregation, the Columbine church of Christ. Their generosity has made Mission Vanuatu a reality for all of us.

Support Raising Progress!

These graphs show team progress in raising monthly and one-time funds, as of 10-18-04.



RECENT TRIP TO VANUATU

In July of this year Eric and Shawnda Brandell as well as Mike Olson went to Vanuatu on a short-term campaign. They held daily Bible studies for anyone wishing to come. Two such individuals, named Jesse and Donald, had a life-changing experience because of their visit.

Jesse Temar is a man who desires to study God's Word. In fact, Eric studied with him one day for 6 hours, and then about 2 hours each day after that for about 1 week. Jesse showed much dedication in his studies and even learned how to lead singing for the first time.

Studying with Jesse opened up a door of opportunity for our team. After he was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, he invited our team to come to his house and study the Bible with his family. After about 5 hours of lessons conducted over 2 days, much progress was made. Though the rest of the family did not become Christians, the studies provided great inroads into the community.

Our goal is to work with Jesse to strengthen him and to continue to study with his family upon our arrival.



Donald Tari, pictured above, is 18 years old and works for a company that exports sea cucumbers. In January, he plans to begin law school in the capital city of Port Vila.

Our team met Donald one evening while he was on the way to the store. Shawnda invited him to study the Bible and he literally ran to the store, purchased his groceries, then ran home with his groceries before coming back to study.

As a result of these personal Bible studies, Donald was baptized and can now worship with Jesse and a handful of other Christians on the island of Espiritu Santo.

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Check us out on the web at: WWW.MISSIONVANUATU.COM

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