

Mission Vanuatu Minutes

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TEAM UPDATES

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

The Bakers

Aaron, Cindy and Kaela have remained especially busy since the last update. We recently traveled to California, visiting Aaron's parents who attend the Anderson church of Christ.

This trip to California was much welcomed as my parents were eager to see their only grandchild-Kaela. They did what any self-respecting grandparents would do...they spoiled Kaela and then gave her back to her parents.

In addition to visiting family, I gave several presentations. I met with the Palo Cedro and Alta Mesa churches of Christ regarding support. Both congregations were excited that someone from their hometown was going to spread the Gospel on a mission field. As a result, both congregations agreed to support our work!

In November, we traveled to Oklahoma City to have our Thanksgiving meal with Cindy's family. Please pray for us as we continue to travel, driving some roads which may not be in the best conditions since winter is in full swing.

Kaela has just turned 5 months old and is growing quickly. At her last doctor appointment she weighed in at 11 lbs. and 10 oz, and measured 24" long. She has

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FEATURED ARTICLE

-By Mike Olson

"Escape Artists"

The name Harry Houdini is easily recognized by all of us for who he is and what he did. He is possibly history's greatest and most well known magician. However, Houdini did not become famous by doing simple tricks like pulling a rabbit out of a hat or pulling a bouquet of flowers out of his sleeve. He ultimately gained his fame by being an escape artist. Whether it was a locked jail cell, a straight jacket, or an underwater trap, he created awe in his audience by defying the odds and escaping from the inescapable.

What Houdini considered his greatest escape, was to escape death. This he could not do as he died on October 31, 1926. Ironically, what can not be done physically, can be done spiritually by all who wish to live eternally. The apostle Peter details the Christian's escape from the world and its trappings in the book of Second Peter.

The concept of escaping implies three different features. First escape implies that we are fleeing from something. We do not just find ourselves out of a bad situation all of a sudden. There must be a deliberate attempt to get away from sin and the evil that is in the world. The need is for an attitude that will not tolerate sinfulness and action that does whatever is necessary to escape the situation. Second, escape implies an imminent danger. Satan's domain is the sinful world. It is pressing down on us trying to transform us into its image. Peter's words

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not yet begun to crawl, but anytime now she will be "off to the races." Please pray for us as we work hard to raise a godly child and attempt to keep up with her.

The Brandells

The Brandells are preparing to travel to Duncan and Tulsa during the Thanksgiving holiday. Eric has one presentation scheduled, and plans to meet with a couple of other congregations in Oklahoma while there. Both excitement and nervousness are beginning to kick in, as we inch closer and closer to the move date, especially since so many congregations, individuals and foundations will be giving some much-anticipated answers over the next month.

God is good, and continues to bless the team with positive responses. Shawnda and I continue to be encouraged by so many generous friends, families and congregations who have signed on to help us live and work in Vanuatu. As the move approaches, we are beginning to realize what an awesome opportunity we have before us. It is a blessing to serve God in this capacity, and we thank each of you for your generous support and assistance. I look forward to the day when I am typing this update from my home in Port Vila, Vanuatu! Thanks again, and please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments. To God be the glory!

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.

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

tell us to take flight from all that can hurt us. Peter is focusing on spiritual danger. Physical harm can only do so much to hurt us, but spiritual threats put our very souls in the perils of hell. Third, the need for escape implies being under the control of another person or situation. There is no need to escape from a pleasant situation or from the rule of a benevolent master. However, the world does not offer comfort but an unyielding obligation to obey its every desire (John 8:34).

What do we escape from? Three passages give us insight into exactly what the Christian flees from. **First**, 2 Peter 1:4 says that the Christian has, "escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust." Corruption is the idea of ruin or decay, especially in a moral sense. Just like an old car decays in the junkyard, the world is falling apart morally and spiritually. It is because of man's lusts or passions that ruin is in the world. These evil desires have brought in all kinds of corruption such as lying, murder and hatred toward God.

The **second** item to escape from is the defilements or pollution that is in the world, (2 Peter 2:20). The defilements of the world are the evils brought into the world through crime or wrong-doing. It is the ungodly aftermath of those who choose a way contrary to God, and instead support the sinful world. Picture a person standing in a decaying building. The building represents the corruption which is in the world. Then the building starts to fall apart around you. This falling apart represents the defilement in the world. The world through man's lust is in a state of ruin and all the evil aspects are creating a danger which we need to escape from.

The **third** escape is different from the first two. Both of the previously mentioned escapes were an initial fleeing from the world into God's righteousness. This indicates becoming a Christian. But in 2:18, the escape is the faithful Christian's continual fleeing from the trappings of the world. Picture is of a man running with a dog nipping at his heels. This is sometimes the way it is for the faithful. Sin, false teachers, temptation, and lust are hounding us and we need a way of escape. Satan is doing his best to bring us into his camp (1 Peter 5:8), and we need to escape!

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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.

SUPPORT RAISING PROGRESS

Our team is really making progress! Here are our latest numbers for the team:

Our goal is to raise: \$79,100 in one-time funds;
\$9,060 in monthly salary funds and work funds

Our raised totals: We have raised all our needed one-time funds and \$8,925 in monthly salary funds.

While we are well on our way to accomplishing our goal, we still need some help. For example, our budgeted amount to move to Vanuatu was \$8,200. What we have discovered is that it will cost us almost \$10,000 to move, largely due to rising gas prices. Your help has been a tremendous blessing to us as many of our readers have contributed to this mission effort to take the Gospel to Vanuatu.

Our goal of moving to Vanuatu at the end of January, 2005 is in sight. Through your help and prayers we are nearly at the end of our support raising trips. Please continue to petition the Lord for his blessings as we prepare minister to the people of Vanuatu for 5 years.

How do we escape? Peter identifies knowledge as the vehicle of escape. It is important to have both an experiential and a growing knowledge (1:6; 3:18), but also a complete knowledge. This complete knowledge is knowledge of Jesus. It includes all that He has to offer and all that he demands in order to bring us out of the world. This is not a cursory knowledge of the Lord or His word, but a full knowledge that is able to save (1:2-3; 2:21). This knowledge will ultimately provide a way out from the sin, false teaching, temptation, and lust which the devil uses to lure us away from God.

The great escape is not from any man made device. The greatest escape possible is from the corruption and defilement of this world, into the love and security of Jesus Christ. In his first letter to the Christians Peter tells how this is accomplished. They were saved by baptism, immersion in water, to give them a clear conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21). Have you escaped?

"ALMOST TASTE IT..." **-by Aaron Baker**

Do you like chocolate chip cookies? I sure do. In fact I can hardly wait to sample them when Cindy puts a batch in the oven. I often 'sample' the batter while Cindy stirs it up, though she usually calls it stealing. As they bake, the aroma of freshly baking cookies fills the kitchen. My mouth waters. My eyes close. I can now imagine the tenderness of biting into a soft, delicious, chocolate chip cookie. At this point I can hardly wait for the timer to sound because my salivary glands have kicked into hyperdrive. I can almost taste those cookies.

That immense expectation and overwhelming desire to, "have it now," is exactly what I feel towards moving to Vanuatu. Our team has been planning, raising funds, and praying about this mission work for well over a year and a half now. I can close my eyes and feel the humidity and sweltering heat of Vanuatu. I can envision myself working hard daily to prepare lessons, set up Bible studies, and encourage the locals.

Though I can "almost taste it," I am still thankful for this time I have in the good ol' USA to visit family and friends. While the holidays are here, it is good to have encouragement before we move, knowing that we will encounter problems we could never have planned for. Please pray for us as we work patiently to be prepared before moving to Vanuatu. It is easy to get caught up with the events of the future. We must be certain to take care of today before we worry about tomorrow.

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Check us out on the web at: www.missionvanuatu.com

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