

MISSION VANUATU MINUTES

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A newsletter published by: Aaron, Cindy and Kaela Baker • Eric and Shawnda Brandell • Mike Olson

A WARM WELCOME

-By Aaron Baker

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Our arrival into Vanuatu was a warm one. Not only was the weather 60 degrees warmer than the temperatures we left behind in Denver, but the reception we received from the Christians in Vanuatu was just as warm.

Our team went from Port Vila and drove out of town 1 hour over pothole ridden roads to the village of Eton. The Christians in Port Vila and the Christians in Eton wanted to all worship together so we could renew friendships and encourage one another on our spiritual walk. Before the morning Bible study on Sunday, April 24th, Morris Felix presented each of our team with flowers we were to wear. This gift was an encouragement to the men and the women alike as we all received flowers.

Such a gift is not uncommon in island countries. In fact, when traveling to Hawaii a tourist can expect to receive a flower lei. While we went to Eton as workers and not tourists, we also received a kind gesture. Our receiving these flowers meant more to our team than we could express. The Christians in Eton wanted to express their joy for our coming to work with them. The gift of these flowers communicated to us that we were welcome, loved, and part of Christian family that extends beyond the borders of the USA. The gesture was kind and nearly brought each one of us to tears.

Pictured here are Eric and Shawnda Brandell, Mike Olson, Aaron, Cindy, and Kaela Baker. Though Kaela did not get any flowers, she was still a welcome part of the team.



PORT VILA PERSEVERANCE

-By Aaron Baker

For years the church of Christ meeting at Port Vila has met in many different locations. In the past the church has either met for worship in member's houses or in a rented building. When the rent was too expensive for a building, they would meet at Shem's house. When the roads would get too bad to drive to Shem's because of the rain, they met at Stephen's. If Stephen was out of town one weekend, they might meet back at Shem's or go to another man's house. I think they stopped at more locations than the Jews during the Wilderness Wanderings.



To remedy this problem, one congregation in New Zealand has decided to begin a project to erect a building in which the church could meet in Port Vila. The land is close to the airport and is a perfect location for attracting visitors to Vanuatu, as well as locals. The building which will begin construction in 2006, will be strong enough to withstand hurricanes that might pass through, and yet pleasing enough to the eye that one might stop by for a visit.

The congregation in Wellington, New Zealand sent Todd O'Donnell and Antony Raine to evaluate the land, costs of construction, and begin planning the construction. From April 23rd through May 8th Todd and Antony were hard at work in Port Vila. Todd, a preacher for the church of Christ in Wellington, taught several classes and preached in both Port Vila and Eton. Both Todd and Antony worked hard during their two weeks here and a great encouragement to our team. We were glad to share a few meals together with them in the short time they were in Port Vila.

Please pray for Todd, Antony, and the Wellington church of Christ as they continue to raise funds to construct a building in which the Christians in Port Vila could meet. Their donation of this building will help the Christians in Port Vila, as well as our mission team reach out to the community and ultimately reach souls for the Lord.

BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY

-By Mike Olson

There are many words in the realm of Christendom which are almost universally recognized. Putting aside the obvious (i.e. God, Jesus) the term **pastor** stands out as one of our universally known words. But just who or what is a pastor? What does the Bible say? What does man say?

The term "pastor" comes for the Greek word *poimen* whose root meaning is "to protect." It is defined as a shepherd, or one who tends. The majority of our English Bibles only use the word pastor one time, in Ephesians

4:11. This single verse does not however tell the whole story of the word pastor. Pastor is one of six terms that our Bibles use to describe the same person or office. Three Greek words are translated to get these six terms.

Presbuteros – elder and presbyter **Episcopos**- bishop and overseer **Poimen**- shepherd and pastor

All of these terms are interchangeable. An elder is the same thing as a pastor or a bishop. An overseer is the same as a shepherd or presbyter. These terms all identify the same person or office. Acts 20:17-28 shows us this very fact. As the apostle Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders about his work and their commission, he uses these three Greek words.

Verse 17 has the Greek term *presbuteros* translated as elders while verse 28 uses the remaining two Greek words, *episcopos* translated as bishop or overseer, and *poimen* translated as shepherd or feed. The same person speaking in the same context applies all of these terms to the same people.

The reason this is important information is that the religious world today does not use the word “pastor” correctly. In nearly every church building on nearly every corner in America and around the world there is a man called Pastor. He is one man who “runs” the church, makes decisions, preaches the sermons and spiritually guides the members. This is a problem for two reasons: **1)** the biblical precedent for pastors/elders/overseers is a plurality of men (Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1; Acts 11:30) who meet specific qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4); **2)** it represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the Scriptures. No one refers to me as “doctor” because I am not an M.D. Also I would not seek a title that did not belong to me such as “doctor.” Why then is it supposed to be proper to wear a religious title incorrectly? Why would a person take a title which does not belong to them? The answer lies in religious tradition that has been accepted for centuries.

In order to build a progression in history of this tradition, the following quotations from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia under the heading of “Church” are offered.

“It may be said generally that about the close of the 1st century every Christian community was ruled by a body of men who are sometimes called presbyters (elders), sometimes but more rarely bishops (overseers)... In the early centuries those local churches, thus organized, while they never lacked the sense that they all belonged to one body, were independent self-governing communities.”

“The court of elders had no president or permanent chairman.”

“There was a two-fold [elders and deacons-MDO] not a threefold ministry. During the 3rd century, rising into notice by way of geographical distribution rather than in definite chronological order, this twofold congregational ministry became threefold in the sense that **one man was placed at the head of each community with the title of pastor or bishop (the titles are interchangeable as late as the 4th century at least).**” (emphasis added)

“During the 2nd century the ministry was subject to a change. The ruling body of office-bearers in every congregation [elders] received a permanent president, who was called the pastor or bishop, the latter term being the commoner. The change came gradually. It provoked no strong opposition. By the beginning of the 3rd century it was everywhere accepted.”

“When we seek to trace the causes why the college of elders received a president, who became the center of all the ecclesiastical life in the local church and the one potent office-bearer, we are reduced to conjecture”

“Scholars have brought forward many reasons for the change; the need for an undivided leadership in times of danger from external persecution or from Gnostic speculations; the convenience of being represented to other local churches by one man who could charge himself with the administration of the external affairs of the congregation; the need of one man to preside at the solemn and crowning act of worship, the administration of the Lord's Supper; the sense of congregational unity implied in the possession of one leader -- each or all are probable ways in which the churches were influenced in making this change in their ministry.”

As it would turn out, the presiding pastor would be the most important person, presiding over all acts of worship and controlling what was taught. Nothing would be done without his consent. This most unbiblical form of church government still rears its head today but is not what God designed.

We should define the term “pastor” according to the Scriptures: he is an elder/overseer/shepherd leading, overseeing and tending the flock of God's people. He is neither single in his authority, nor is he the source of authority. The authority which he possesses is that which God has given him. Pastors are not built by tradition but by God. This is why Paul includes them in Ephesians 4:11 as one of the gifts for a unified body. “And He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as **pastors** and teachers.”

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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- † A Warm Welcome
- † Port Vila
Perseverance
- † Biblical Terminology



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