

Mission Vanuatu Minutes

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

"BALI HAI HAS FOUND US"

-By Vutilolo

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A classic book by James Michener, entitled, *Tales of the South Pacific*, which was later made into a musical called, "South Pacific" speaks of a mysterious island covered in clouds. The island that Michener wrote about is the island named Ambae in Vanuatu. In the musical the song is sung, "Bali Hai will find you." In our report this month we talk about how we went to Ambae, or Bali Hai, and how the mysteriousness of the island has, indeed, found us.

Several months before our trip to Ambae, which was September 9th through the 12th, our team began planning our trip. There are Christians that live and worship on Ambae and one of our goals as a team was to visit these Christians and discover how our team might help them grow spiritually and numerically in Vanuatu. We were invited by a Christian named Paul Vuhu to come and teach in his village on the topic of "church growth." Our team was ready to assist the Christians on the island of Ambae who live in the village of Duviara. After receiving the invitation to come teach and preach, our team began making preparations for the classes and traveling involved. Aaron, Eric and Mike each planned several classes not only on the topic of church growth, but also to encourage local Christians with lessons on personal evangelism. Shawnda prepared lessons centered around women's responsibilities in the church and how to effectively teach Sunday school classes. Cindy and Kaela remained in Port Vila to "hold down the fort."

Traveling

In order to get to the village of Duviara, one does not simply hop on a plane, hail a taxi and then just head straight for the village, but one needs help. Paul provided us great help by meeting us at the airport. Once the airplane touched down on the grass airstrip we grabbed our bags and tossed them into the back of a truck. The men then rode in the back of the truck while Shawnda rode inside to the village of Lolowai. Once at Lolowai we purchased some basic food supplies, piled our stuff into a different transport truck and then headed up the mountain towards the village of Duviara.

I was thoroughly impressed at the skills the driver possessed. He could make a four wheel drive truck with bald tires go up hills that I could barely walk up. I'm not sure what impressed me most. Maybe it was his years of experience driving these roads, the fact that we had enough weight in the back to pop most tires, or the fact that the seatbelt was tied to the frame to hold the driver's door closed. Whatever it was that caught my attention, I was glad I was not the one driving.

We went by truck as far as the ruts in the road took us, which took about one hour, we hopped out, grabbed our bags and hiked 20 minutes uphill to Paul's village, Duviara. Upon arriving at Paul's we were greeted by the villagers who came to meet the "Tuturanis," or white people. We met all of Paul's family and the Christians that were present and were eager to get started teaching our lessons and getting to know the people of Duviara.



Grass airstrip on Ambae where our team landed

Teaching

Our topics on church growth were requested by the Christians in Ambae. Though we were surprised at their request for such a 'meaty' topic, it was evident that as Christians they were ready to have "solid food." On Friday night, the 9th, Mike Olson taught a great lesson on church growth, looking at the church as the pillar and support of truth using 1 Timothy 3:15. Several commented on how much they enjoyed Mike's lesson, not only was it a great message, but it carried extra weight as Mike presented it in Bislama. In fact, Mike had the privilege of being the first white man to speak Bislama in the building where they meet for worship.

On Saturday we began at 8 am and ended at around noon. Aaron spoke first that morning on the topic of improving church work, followed by Eric teaching the responsibilities of men in the church. During Eric's lesson the men and women split up. While Eric was teaching the men about their responsibilities, Shawnda was teaching the women about theirs. Many women were ecstatic not only with the fact that Shawnda had come, but that she could speak Bislama and was able to present a great lesson to the women on their responsibilities in the church.

Saturday evening we followed our church growth focused lessons with personal evangelism lessons. The morning lessons were more "theory and scripture" of church growth, while the evening lessons were more practical. We passed out lessons that we had written in Bislama. Then we went over the lessons with them which so they could take and then use to study with others. Our goal was to teach them how to teach others the Gospel. Not only did they grasp the concept, but they were eager to try studying with others.

Sunday was the close of our stay in Duviara and Aaron taught a lesson on: Ideas for Church Growth. Though our stay in Ambae was only over one weekend, we were able to make a positive impact on the Christians there not only through our ability to communicate in Bislama, but also through our equipping them with skills they could use to help cultivate church growth.

An Incredible Honor

To help communicate the honor and respect that is such a part of the Melanesian culture, we want to share with you some interesting events that took place on our trip. These events help give insight into the lives and culture of Vanuatu.

Upon arrival on Friday night, a Chief named Harry Vuti adopted Aaron as his son. This was a surprise to Aaron in which he was given great respect and honor. On the night of arrival, Chief Harry presented to Aaron a special food, lap-lap wrapped in banana leaves and decorated with flowers, and a dyed purple mat (which is very expensive in the local culture). Aaron was also given a custom name: Vutilolo (pronounced Futi-lolo), which means "the mountain above all other mountains which has plenty of good things."

In addition, a girl from the village adopted Shawnda as her sister. She was given the name Meta Lovuti (pronounced Moo-eta-low-futi), which means: a woman of the Vuti family. Her new sister gave her decorated lap-lap, a dyed purple mat, and a woven purse. Shawnda's new sister, Loleen, wanted to honor her for coming to encourage the women in Duviara.

Also, a Christian in Duviara, named Benuel, took Mike as his brother. Benuel is very sick with a disease that causes him to be literally skin and bones. Benuel was unable to make a special lap-lap for Mike, but still honored him with a mat. Mike was given the custom name: Malaliu (pronounced Mala-lee-oo), which means "the big bird to which all others turn to for food." Mike was greatly honored to now have family in Ambae. Of course our team later took the opportunity to tease Mike and tell him that his name just meant, "Big Bird."



Mike teaching in Duviara



Chief Harry Vuti with Aaron

As well, a son of Paramount Chief James Anga took Eric as his son. Aiden Tari, who is a son of the Chief, adopted Eric. This means that Eric is now kin to the Chiefly line. Aiden gave Eric a special lap-lap, a woven man, and the custom name: Tari Gereca, which means, "good chief."



New sisters: Shawnda and Loleen

Paul Vuhu from Ambae

Special Lap-lap decorated with flowers

Eric with his father – Aiden Tari

The Results

As a result of our trip to Ambae, all were encouraged. Our team worked hard with both men and women alike to share with them ideas and ways through which the church can grow – numerically and spiritually. The congregation at Duviara was grateful not only for the men of our team to come and present lessons, but they were specially touched by Shawnda's coming to work with the women of Duviara.

Paul expressed his desire to personally work hard for the Lord by planning to go to the West part of Ambae and try to plant a church there. This brought joy to our team, seeing the love for Christ that motivated this man to want to start the church in another part of Ambae. Please pray for Paul as he begins to plan this effort for later this year.

Our team headed to Ambae to encourage Christians in the Lord. Our trip resulted in our team receiving so much love and honor from local Christians that it really strengthened our love for the people, culture, and Christians in Vanuatu. Bali Hai was a mysterious place which Mitchener loved, and we can see why. Bali Hai has indeed found us!

To read a detailed account of our trip into the village of Duviara, just visit our website: www.missionvanuatu.com !

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

-By Eric Brandell

You may recall my meeting a man named James during my short trip to Vanuatu in March of this year. He is the one who invited me to his house for dinner, and later to a wedding, while I was in the country for two weeks securing the team's government-required paperwork. During our August Preaching in the Park, I ran into him again as I was canvassing the crowd. Since March, he has been appointed to play a significant role in the government, specifically with the Department of Foreign Affairs. During this meeting, he asked me if I would come and speak during the Department's morning devotional the following Tuesday. After speaking that first Tuesday morning, they asked me to come back every Tuesday to share a 10-minute lesson from God's word with them.

This is indeed a unique opportunity, as we would probably not otherwise have a chance to meet and study with these Government officials (between 5 and 10 show up every Tuesday). To date, I have presented two "non-confrontational" lessons to the group. I call them non-confrontational because I purposely chose Bible lessons that I thought everyone already agreed with. Soon, I will begin teaching on some "more controversial" topics...considered controversial because not too many people follow the whole truth of God's word. Please be praying for the success of these lessons. Who knows what might happen as a result of this unique opportunity!

MISSION VANUATU MINUTES

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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