

Mission Vanuatu Minutes

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

-By Aaron Baker

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Do you ever wonder how much your children are learning in their Sunday School classes? For the most part children attend Sunday School 52 times a year. Do they really learn anything? Does their attendance at these weekly classes really ever accomplish anything? The answer is a resounding, "YES!"

I'm sure you have often wondered how much good, if any, your children receive through their attending Sunday School classes. If you have ever pondered these questions, let me put your minds at ease. Children do, in fact, learn at incredible rates. Let me share an example with you, from here in Vanuatu.

Both Cindy Baker and Shawnda Brandell have been teaching the Sunday School class since our arrival in Vanuatu. Cindy and Shawnda coordinated with the local ladies to either teach or co-teach the children. Since the beginning of these classes the growth these children have displayed is amazing.

This month, Cindy set out to help them learn the books of the Bible. She started slowly, having them learn the names of just a few books at a time. Gradually, they built upon their knowledge until they had memorized all the books of the Old Testament. In the USA, most children who attend Sunday School learn the books of the Old Testament as one of the first building blocks of teaching. However, this was not the case in Vanuatu. Upon our arrival, the children knew few of the books of the Old Testament. Through much practice, these children were able to memorize the books of the Old Testament and are now working to memorize the books of the New Testament as well!

What seems like just a small step to most people was a giant triumph for our team. To watch these children grow from minimal knowledge of the Bible, to begin memorizing the books of the Old Testament was quite an accomplishment. The children worked to memorize the names of the books at home. They were so excited to learn them that we were told by many parents that their children would practice their books throughout the week and talk all week about going to Sunday School. As a reward for memorizing the books of the Old Testament, the class recited them to the congregation. Cindy printed certificates for the children recognizing their hard work and presented their certificates as they all said the books of the Old Testament. There were grins from ear to ear on the faces of all: parents



Cindy, with co-teacher Akeisa, pictured with their Bible class.

and children alike. Our team, especially Cindy and Shawnda, were so very proud of these children for their hard work, dedication and excitement to learn God's Word.

So what is the importance of Sunday School? By looking at the faces of these children and watching their growth, Sunday School is of vital importance. So important, in fact, that they talked about it throughout the week. We could all learn a great lesson from these children. Is Sunday School important to these children? Do they ever really learn anything valuable? Again, the example of these children shouts a resounding,

"YES!"



Sunday School children proudly holding their certificates!

GREAT NEWS!

-By Aaron Baker

Two areas in particular this month have been noteworthy of mentioning in our monthly reports. First, the Port Vila congregation has land which was donated to them a few years ago. This land, until recently, has remained untouched and unused. A congregation in New Zealand has been raising funds for a building to be constructed on the land which the church owns. Now, due to a generous gift by a Christian couple, all of the funds are in hand and we can begin construction on the building.

Currently the Port Vila congregation is renting a room from a social center (similar to fairgrounds) in which to meet. This would work well for a while except for the fact that there are 4 denominations renting the other buildings in the area. So on a typical Sunday morning the "noise" from the denominations worshipping with instruments blasted through a sound system nearby makes it very difficult to concentrate on teaching, preaching, worshipping and learning God's Word. Needless to say, the congregation is looking forward to moving to a "place of our own" where we can worship and meet in peace.



A look at the future construction site. The tree must be cut down before cyclone season to avoid disaster later on.

Pictured above is a glimpse of the land. Due to hurricanes frequently visiting the South Pacific, the huge tree which can be seen in the picture must be cut down. To date, the branches have been cut down and all that remains now is the huge base. Once the tree is removed, pegs will be placed in the ground to mark where the building will be constructed. The team from the Wellington church of Christ in New Zealand is currently organizing the planning and construction of the building. Plans are for the building to be constructed in early 2006. Please pray for our progress through these steps of building...a place of our own.

The second item of noteworthy news has to do with congregational attendance. In the month of October we have experienced the highest attendance since our arrival. When our team arrived, we met in a Christian's house and there were 7 Christians (not including the 5 of our mission team) meeting with no visitors. Here were our numbers for attendance for October:

Date	# Christians	# Christians visiting from out of town	# visitors	# children	Total adults	Adjusted # w/out missionaries
10/2/2005	14	3	8	10	25	20
10/9/2005	14	2	1	8	17	12
10/16/05	14	2	5	9	19	14
10/23/05	12	3	6	8	21	16
10/30/05	12	6	5	9	23	18

We decided to not include the 5 adults on our mission team in the total numbers as a more accurate look at the growth of the congregation since our arrival. By looking at this chart it is clear that a growth from 7 Christians to adults in attendance (9 Christians, 3 Christians visiting from out of town and 8 visitors) is quite a growth. We praise God for allowing this congregation to increase! We do not show these numbers to hold our heads high and boast our work, but to show that growth is, indeed, taking place in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

KALJA KONA

-By Aaron Baker

The "Kalja Kona" or, "cultural corner," will introduce you to some of the cultural aspects of Vanuatu which must be considered while doing mission work. For the next few months, we will show some aspects of culture that we come in contact with, especially as it relates to studying the Bible with people here in Vanuatu.

This month Aaron met a man in Vanuatu from the island of Tanna. In Tanna, culture is strong. There are many cultural beliefs that do not agree with the Bible, which unfortunately, have been handed down from generation to generation. In our Bible studies, we have to make sure that we address these beliefs which contradict the Bible and teach the locals correctly.

In Tanna, one story passed down is about the sin in the garden of Eden. They believe that the sin of Adam and Eve is passed down from mothers to children at the time of birth. As a result, when women have a ceremony to celebrate their coming of age, around age 16, the women are tattooed on their back. The belief is that every woman inherits some blood from Eve. This infected blood must be taken out of the body so that the young woman will not lead a sinful life. At the ceremony the girl's back is cut with a sharp piece of bamboo to take out the "bad blood." The bush doctor will cut their back in a design specific to the island of Tanna. As the cuts heal, the scars are reminders to the girl of Eve's sin and her roots within culture.

As you can guess, this presents many interesting studies with people from Tanna. When we study the Bible, we must go very slowly and show what the sin in the garden of Eden really was, and how it does not "pass down" from one generation to the next. This is just an interesting glimpse into the cultural beliefs of Vanuatu and how, when in conflict with the Bible, the truth must be taught without compromise.

Even today there are many women who are "tattooed" or have scars in the design given them by the bush doctor. As I study the Bible with this man from Tanna, I must be careful not to offend him as his wife was tattooed in this manner. At the same time, I cannot let a cultural belief which contradicts the Bible to be promoted as truth. So, slowly and surely I must teach the truth, peppered with love and respect for the people of Vanuatu. Even though their culture is engrained within them at a young age, they must "obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

MISSION VANUATU MINUTES

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

IN THIS ISSUE:

- † The Importance of Sunday School
- † Great News
- † Kalja Kona

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