

Mission Vanuatu Minutes

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

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Extra, extra, read all about it in this month's issue of Mission Vanuatu Minutes!

Eric and Mike braved the waves and took a boat to Emao Island to encourage the Christians there.

The building project in Port Vila continues to move forward to completion.

Our team is glad to share the story of Tom and Alice from Etas village who were willing to make a big sacrifice to become Christians.

Finally in this month's newsletter, read about some of our team's upcoming plans. There's so much to read...you had better get started!

Trip to Emao Island By: Mike Olson

August 29 – September 1

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened" (Matt 7:7-8).

The emphasis of the above verses is that we many times need to continually ask, seek and knock before the opportunity can open up. This is certainly the case for Marou (MAR-OO) village, Emao Island. Three men who obeyed the gospel here on Efate Island established the congregation back in 2003. They went back and taught friends and family. The congregation stands today at eighteen members. This however is only the beginning of the story.

Since it's beginning, there have been only a few trips to teach and strengthen these



Above : Marou village where Eric and Mike encouraged Christians to obey God above all else. The village lies only a few feet from the ocean where fresh fish is a staple in the local diet.



brethren. One of the locals named Eddie Karris of Eton village has been able to make infrequent trips to see and teach the brethren. Outside of these trips, the denominational leaders have prevented our mission team and sometimes even the locals from going to Emau. All of this changed recently as the continual asking, seeking and knocking has paid off. Members of the mission team Eric and Mike, as well as Eddie Karris, traveled to the north of Efate by truck and then took a 30-minute boat ride over to Emau. Members of the church and community welcomed us warmly.

The Christians there are very young in the faith and lack a great deal of knowledge. They have struggled to break out on their own and establish themselves as the Lord's body in the village. The unique nature of the village (it is located on a very small sand peninsula and literally everyone is your next door neighbor) makes it hard to separate from their friends. The bulk of their influence has been denominational in nature so much teaching and encouragement was required.

Our original plan was to teach evangelistically in the evening from Thursday to Saturday at the new kindergarten building in the village. Our theme was "The church of the Bible." However, upon meeting and talking with chief Nobat, he suggested that we meet in the morning in the church building occupied by the "Church of the

Bible" denomination. There are only two congregations in the village, Christ's church and the Church of the Bible. It was very positive to have the village chief giving us a special opportunity to teach, as well as advertising the lessons to the denomination.

There were two morning sessions in which Mike taught the history of the church from creation to its beginning, and the church from its beginning to the present. God designed to build and save men in one church. Denominations were never part of His plan. On Saturday morning Eric answered questions submitted by people in the village. Q&A is the best form of teaching in Vanuatu. Each morning there were nineteen people in attendance and more than half were not Christians. The chief said that the lessons were "new to us here in Marou" and that they would study and consider what was said. Overall our teaching was well received by all and the chief was gracious enough to offer half day teaching and Q&A sessions next time we come back.

The evenings were spent teaching the brethren at the house where we were



Above: The Christians from Marou village on Emau Island are encouraged by the lessons Mike and Eric taught.



Above: Eric teaches about the true "church of the Bible."

...Trip to Emau, cont.

staying. Several of the members listened as Eric and Mike taught and answered questions for the Christians. It is great to be able to straighten the crooked paths and start them on a better road. Their questions show their limited understanding, but the brethren showed no resistance to changing to a biblical way of doing things. Part of being a disciple is learning all that Jesus commands (Matt 28:20).

Sunday was their first Sunday to meet as the church. Eddie began the morning with children's class, and worship followed. The men were asked to fulfill the duties needed for the assembly and they did an admirable job despite it being something they were not used to or comfortable with. Eric preached on the need to obey God above all else. This was a timely message since many things the

church has been doing seem right in the eyes of man, but God wants us to do only what He says to do (1 Samuel 15). This was a new and exciting time for all of us and we were glad to be part of a trip to build up Christians in Emau.



The work of meeting and maintaining the church is left in the hands of the brethren for now. The team is planning a trip back to Marou in mid October to teach and strengthen the brethren. Much work lies ahead to keep the church strengthened and moving in the right direction. But then again, mission work is just that, work. Please add these brethren to your prayers. God bless you!

Building Project Progresses

Despite an unusually wet "dry" season, work has continued on the building project. As you will remember, this project kicked off in March with the pouring of the foundation. In July a group of workers teamed up with our own manpower from Vanuatu to lay blocks and put walls up. We are now in the process of finishing the rendering (some call it plastering) of the cement blocks to smooth out the walls. Also, we finished the cement work around the doorways and windows and are preparing them for painting.



Above: Tom (L) and Patrick (R) work on plastering the toilets.



Above: The building now has a roof, but no windows yet. With good weather the building is not far from being finished.

We also focused our work on the toilet area as it also needed to be rendered inside and out. Though the rain has slowed our work down more than we would like, we are still making progress. Local Christians such as Patrick (from Port Vila) and Tom (from Etas village) put in a lot of effort to help move this project closer to completion. Please pray for this project as we move one step closer to having a building in which to meet and another tool we can use to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Paul looked at his life before he knew Christ and proclaimed loudly that what he gave up in order to be in fellowship with Christ was worth the cost. Rather than cling to the past, Paul looked to his future with Christ. The same can be said for a new couple from Etas village who were baptized into Christ.

Tom and Alice Iaruel (pronounced Ee-are-eu-well) had been coming to our weekly Wednesday night studies for quite some time. In addition, they both were regulars to worship on Sunday and were very active, despite not being members of the church.

Twice Tom had been invited to study the Bible with me and twice he accepted the offer. However, as the studies progressed, Tom quit coming. I would press him about what the problem was, but Tom was too shy to tell, but each time we studied about how to become a Christian, he simply wouldn't show up! One thing about mission work, you sure learn to have patience.

One day Tom admitted that the reason he wouldn't become a Christian is because he was ashamed that his only source of income was money from the Kava bar he owned and operated.

Kava is a root that is ground up, mixed with water, strained and when drunk, produces an intoxicating effect. I had talked several times with Tom about the dangers of Kava and how drunkenness was a sin, yet each time Tom resisted.

Finally Tom's heart was pricked as the Word of God weighed heavily on his conscience. Tom asked Eric and I to talk



Left: Tom feeling a little great, yet a little cold, after being immersed into Christ.



Above (L to R): Aaron is ready to dry off after just baptizing Alice and Tom.

with him about becoming a Christian, and we gladly accepted. Tom poured out his heart about how he was ready to be rid of kava and his business, though in doing so he would let go of his only source of income.

That same day, Eric, Aaron and Tom drove out to Etas community and talked with Alice, Tom's wife. She, too was ready to obey the Gospel despite what the costs may be. That same afternoon, Aaron baptized both Tom and Alice into Christ. Both came up from the water with grins from ear to ear, thrilled to be free from the power of sin and now ready to serve God.

We praise God for the decision of Tom and Alice to be baptized into Christ. Please join us as we pray for their continued strength as they will face many struggles before fully "*forgetting those things which are behind*" (Phil. 3:13). We must encourage Tom and Alice to "*press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil 3:14).



Left: Aaron and Alice feel a little cold while waiting for Eric to snap the picture of Alice's baptism.



Upcoming Plans

Our team has quite an assortment of upcoming plans. We ask that you pray for our plans we have to spread the Word of God, for our health and our safety. Here is a snapshot of what is happening with the Mission Vanuatu Team

Bakers will head to States for Reporting purposes

Aaron, Cindy and Kaela will set foot on American soil for the first time in just over a year and a half on November 14th. The Bakers will be visiting their supporting congregations to report on the work here in Vanuatu from Nov. 14th through Jan. 29th. The Bakers have many stops to make while in the States and many people to visit. Make sure to check their schedule on our website at: www.missionvanuatu.com.

Return trip planned for Marou village, Emao

Because there was such a warm reception to Eric and Mike's teaching on the "church of the Bible" a follow up trip was planned. This time Eric and Shawnda both will go to Emao with Morris Felix, from Eton village to build on the lessons taught earlier. This trip will be a great source of encouragement to the Christians in Emao from October 12th – 15th.

Training sessions in Ambae

Aaron will be heading to the island of Ambae to try and strengthen the local Christians through short training sessions. These sessions will be aimed at the men and their need to stand up and be leaders that the church might be strong. Training sessions will be from October 13 through the 23rd.

Strengthening Santo

Mike plans to go to the island of Espiritu Santo, located about 1 hour flight from Port Vila. Mike will spend his time encouraging and strengthening the handful of Christians in Santo to be "strong and courageous" in their worship and service to the Lord.

We hope you recognize some of the places in this newsletter in which we have visited in the past. The work of trying to build up strong Christians doesn't happen overnight. With hard work and dedication, our team hopes to help young Christians grow in their faith and become leaders in the church. May God give the increase through these plans.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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The Mission Vanuatu Team:

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