

Shawnda's journal (December 15th – January 14th)

Thursday, December 15th – Aaron's parents come today – so we are all excited about that. I spent the day doing various odd jobs around the house – cleaning, cooking, cutting, folding and stapling tracts. Also, Ure and Akisa came over so that we could make salu salus for Dave and Nila. We went over to Mike's to get frangipani (a tropical flower) to make them with. Patrick and Ruth (the couple from Tanna who just became Christians last weekend and are staying at Morris' farm) were there and we got to meet them. They are such a sweet couple and we will definitely be praying for them as they study more and grow in the word so that they will be able to teach others and start the church in their home village. We are excited about them and what the future has in store for them.

This evening we had our team dinner (since tomorrow night is the fellowship we moved the team dinner up a night). We had fajitas – a definite favorite of us all. Then we gave Mike his birthday presents and had some peanut butter cookies (which he requested instead of a cake this year). Then we told Mike to choose a game or movie or whatever he wanted to do. He chose a card game (8 to 1 and back). We played that for a while and then went our different ways until it was time to go to the airport and greet the Mitchells.

Ure and Gomon met us at the airport to greet Dave and Nila and present them with the salusalus. They were supposed to arrive at 10:00, the plane was late and they didn't end up getting through immigration and customs until after 11:00. But we were sure glad to see them!

Friday, December 16th – Spent the morning over at the Bakers going through the suitcases and enjoying all of the goodies inside. It sure is nice to have Dave and Nila here. Kaela warmed right up to them – she wasn't apprehensive at all. All of us had been preparing her for them to get here by showing her pictures of them and saying "Grammy and Grandpa" so that she would recognize them. I'm so glad she knows them. That's great.

This evening we had the midweek fellowship at the Bakers (really it was a surprise birthday party for Mike with all of the church family there). Everyone came early so we could surprise Mike. He had some people at his house so he ended up being late. We played "Win, Lose, or Draw" until he came and then when we saw him coming in the gate, we counted "1,2,3" and everyone said, "Surprise!" He was really surprised. Eric and I were a little worried that he had figured it out but when we saw his reaction we knew he really was surprised. He seemed to really enjoy everyone being there and wishing him a "Happy 40th Birthday." It was a great night of fellowship.

Sunday, December 18th – Since the guys went to the villages, it was just the ladies who went to worship this morning. We had a nice day of worship and fellowship with the Christians. There was a good group there. We were disappointed that several young Christians weren't there, but Donald was and we knew Lissie was working and found out later that Yoland was too. Paul and Miriam (from Ambae) and several other visiting Christians were there along with a few visitors. It was good to see Paul and Miriam again. They are planning to stay with us for a few days.

This afternoon Nila, Cindy, Kaela and I went and ate lunch at the Wild Pig and then came home and played Rummikub until the guys got home (almost 4 hours)!

The guys got home after spending several hours Eton to celebrate Mike's 40th birthday. Eddie planned a surprise party for him and they gave him an Eton name. It is Kalowia (which is the stick they use for planting – in reference to him planting the seed of the word in their hearts). He thought that was pretty special.

Paul, Miriam, Alfina and Myrick came to stay with us this evening. They are planning to stay until they find out when they can get a flight home to Ambae.

Monday, December 19th - We got up and ate breakfast with Paul and Miriam and the kids. Paul and Miriam wanted to do some shopping for the kids, so they asked if the kids could stay with me. Of course that was fine. I actually took them down to the playground at Seafront. I don't think either of them had ever played on a playground, so that was an interesting experience for them. Alfina (she's 3) was hiding behind my skirts and didn't know what to do, so I showed her. I climbed up the ladders and slid down the slides. Myrick (he's seven) was off immediately. He hadn't ever been to a playground either, but he picked it up pretty quickly and was soon off to play with another boy. Alfina stuck pretty close, but went off and played on her own a little. I pushed them in the swings and watched them play. Then we sat down and rested in the shade and watched a few boats come and go from the bay. That was pretty interesting to the kids.

This afternoon our guests rested while Cindy and I went grocery shopping. We got our weekly trip done with and then rested ourselves.

We found out that the only flight that Paul and Miriam can get on is scheduled to leave tomorrow, but they only have three seats available. So, Myrick is going to stay with us until they can get him on a later flight.

After much prayer, thought and research we have decided to adopt a baby boy from here in Vanuatu! We are so excited about it. We had a lot of work and research that had to be done before we could start the process and after about a month of making calls to the US immigration services, Homeland Security, and the closest US embassy, we are ready to begin the process. So, this evening Eric and I walked over to the hospital to "put our name in" and tell them that we wanted to adopt a baby boy. We made it clear that we wanted to adopt a baby whose mother was unable to care for him. (Unfortunately there are many teenage pregnancies here.) Now our time of waiting begins. We could have our baby within mere weeks, or it could be months. We are just praying and waiting now.

Tuesday, December 20th - Paul and Miriam left at about 11:00 to head to the airport. Eric, Aaron and Myrick took them to see them off. Myrick doesn't seem to be upset by the fact that they are leaving him behind, which is good. In fact, he actually seems excited that he will be able to stay in Vila longer (it's his first trip to Vila). He will spend Christmas with us.

There was a downpour this afternoon that lasted well into the evening. So, Myrick and I stayed in most of the day and played games. Eric took him on a few outings (he loves to ride in the car), but we mostly just stayed at the house.

Daniel and Flexon came for dinner and studying. After we all ate together, Daniel, Flexon and Eric started studying and the rest of us walked down to a small playground at Independence Park. Kaela and Myrick played for a while and then we all walked home. The circus is in town and set up at Independence Park, so that was an interesting thing for the kids to look at too. If it wasn't so expensive I'd love to take Myrick, but it's pretty expensive, so we probably won't do that.

Wednesday, December 21st - I took Myrick to the park again today. We walked there and were both kind of tired when we got there. The sun was so hot today. He played for a while, rested some and then we took a bus home.

This afternoon we played cards, played with Kaela and rested. When it's hot like this, it's hard to play outside (we'd all have a heat stroke)!

We took Myrick to his aunt's tonight to spend the night. He is actually staying through Saturday morning (his cousin is the same age as him and they have a good time together).

Thursday, December 22nd – This morning Dave, Nila, Cindy, Aaron, Eric and I headed up to Mele Cascade Waterfalls. It's so pretty. The only bad part was that there was a cruise ship in town so it was really crowded (it's a tourist destination). We had a good time anyway and enjoyed ourselves. We stopped on the way up and ate a picnic lunch and then climbed up to the top of the waterfalls. No one had found the very top one, so we had it to ourselves. That was nice.

This afternoon I ventured out on my first solo sewing project (besides the pillows I did for Ure which were really easy). I made a patchwork stocking. It turned out really cute and I enjoyed making it. I was really proud of myself. :o)

This evening we went to Erakor Island to eat out. Dave and Nila took us there for our Christmas present. It was a wonderful atmosphere and the food was delicious. We really enjoyed it.

Friday, December 23rd – We spent the day finishing up wrapping presents and then the guys had their team meeting. We all ate together (spaghetti) and then opened our presents and had our team Christmas. It was a great time. Kaela loved ripping the paper and we all had several good laughs.

Sunday, December 25th - It was a great day again today. Cindy wasn't feeling good this morning, so I did her part of Bible class with the kids. I was happy to do it, but sad that she had to stay home and that she was sick. I miss being with the kids. I'll be glad to start the class with Seselo and Noel in February.

Worship was good too. We had a wonderful time of singing, prayer, the Lord's supper and teaching.

We ate a small lunch and then rested until time to start fajita preparations. After we ate our fajitas we opened stockings with Myrick. Of course we had stockings too, but we really wanted to make it special for Myrick. He seemed to really like everything we got him. We tried to keep it simple (toys that made him use his imagination...like blocks, marbles & playing cards). It was an overwhelming night for him I think, so he went to bed early.

Monday, December 26th – We took Myrick to his aunt's house so he could go to the beach with his family. Eric headed out to Epau to help with the building. They are starting to build today and they wanted Eric to come. He is happy to help out. It ended up that they didn't really need him b/c the guy they hired to build it has his own helpers, but he was able to help with a few things.

I spent some time cleaning this morning. This afternoon I cut, folded and stapled some tracts for Eric, graded some Bible correspondence courses from Epau, and watched a new movie that we got for Christmas.

Tuesday, December 27th – Today I started working on plans for the Bible class for Seselo and Noel that we will start in February. Since we only have them another year as "kids" I want to make sure they get a lot of the basics. So, I will use this curriculum I already have and modify it a little. It should work well. I am just trying to get an overall plan so I can start breaking it down to work on each lesson.

Since everything was closed for a holiday yesterday, we did our grocery shopping today. That, of course, takes a lot of the day. We also went to a few Chinese shops to try to find

some material and supplies to make Cindy a skirt. We found most of what we needed and will start on that tomorrow. Nila is making a pattern first.

This evening Daniel and Flexon came over to eat and study. We always enjoy having them. They are so funny and such neat young men. We are proud of them and can see fine things from them in the future. Flexon is really growing. Daniel is too, but he's still young. He's trying though.

Wednesday, December 28th – I went and visited with Fiona and Joanna today. They both know what they need to know, but I asked them if I could just come visit today. They said, “Anytime, we’re always there – you can come anytime.” So, I went today at our usual time. I enjoyed just visiting. Of course I encouraged them to think about what was hindering them from becoming a Christian. We talked for about an hour and then Eric came to pick me up. He and the men were meeting at lunch to talk about plans for 2006.

Our Christmas package from Eric’s family came today and it was full of goodies. We had a great time opening that and will love getting to use all of it. We also got a package from a ladies class in Raton, NM and it had lots of fun stuff in it – including a tortilla press! I’ll be excited to try that out!

This afternoon Nila, Cindy and I worked on some sewing projects. I hemmed a pair of capris that were too long and took in a shirt that was a little big. Nila and Cindy made a skirt. They all turned out pretty good. Then this evening I made a curtain for the doorway in the office (to cover the clutter in the laundry room).

This afternoon Eric went to Epau to take some cement and on the way home picked up Myrick from his aunt’s.

Thursday, December 29th – We went around the island today. It was a really good day, but going around the island is always a little tiring. We stopped several places to visit with Christians. It’s always fun to experience it with people who have never been around the island before. Dave and Nila got lots of good pictures and had a good time.

While we were stopped at Paunangisu Eric and I went to the health center there and “put our name in” there as well. We talked to a very nice lady who happens to be in charge of the entire health center there. She said that she would be the one to call us when a baby boy is available. It was encouraging. It’s another exciting step in the right direction.

When we got home we made dinner and then relaxed the rest of the evening. I was so tired I decided to go to bed a little earlier than usual.

Friday, December 30th - Spent the day working on covers for the arms of our chairs (we painted them but the humidity has made the paint start coming off on people’s arms when they sit in them). Nila and I worked together on that. They also worked on a skirt for Cindy. We all took turns playing with Myrick and Kaela while the other two worked on the sewing projects.

This afternoon the guys met for their weekly team meeting and then we ate together and visited for a while.

Saturday, December 31st – Eric mowed the yard this morning and Myrick had a grand ‘ole time watching him and “helping” him. I got some things done around the house while Myrick was otherwise occupied. That helped out a lot.

Cindy and I went to the grocery store b/c Monday (our usual shopping day) is a holiday and we would have run out of groceries otherwise! Now we remember why we avoid the grocery store on Saturdays! It was a madhouse (imagine Wal-Mart on a busy day). It was even more

busy than it usually is on Saturdays. I guess people were getting ready for their New Year's Eve parties.

We didn't last until 12:00 tonight – tomorrow is Sunday and we need to be rested for worship. Plus, there was no way that Myrick was keeping his little eyes open that late!

Sunday, January 1st – Today the crowd who came to worship was small, but it was a good time of worship nonetheless. It was just the missionaries, Gomon, Ure, and Akisa and Mark (from Ambae) and one other visitor. But, despite the small crowd, I was able to worship in spirit and truth today. It was a blessing to begin the new year in worship to God.

Tuesday, January 3rd – We took Myrick to the airport this morning to catch his flight back to Ambae. His aunt and cousin came to see him off too. We had a good time with him here, but I know he was ready to get home. He is a good kid and did amazingly well for being away from home with people he didn't know that well (he is only 7 years old after all)! We went home to a quiet house and it was nice just to have the afternoon to ourselves.

Daniel and Flexon came tonight and studied the book of Mark with Eric. They are both really liking the book studies.

Wednesday, January 4th – Aaron, Cindy, Dave and Nila went to Etos to study so we watched Kaela. They came home pretty late because 4 people were baptized. We were so excited to hear about the conversion of Sam, Leimawa, Bless, and Ruth. What an exciting way to start the new year!

Thursday, January 5th – This morning Eric and I went to study with Joanna and Fiona. They both said they were ready to obey the gospel and Flexon wanted us to come study with them to make sure they were counting the cost and were really sure about their decision. Eric and I decided to each talk to one of them instead of talking to them together. Eric talked to Fiona and I talked to Joanna. Both studies went well and they both were ready to be baptized into Christ. We waited for Flexon to come home for lunch and then walked across the street to the ocean and baptized them. It was exciting to see two new sisters be immersed into Christ. Wow – 6 people already added to the Kingdom in 2006! We couldn't ask for a better start to the year than that! We are excited about what God has in store for all of these new Christians in the future. What an exciting thing to be part of teaching people the gospel and seeing them obey it!

This evening we went to Mike's for the weekly fellowship. He went and got Patrick and Ruth out at Morris' farm (the ones who just became Christians from Tanna). We all sang several songs from the Bislama song book so that they could learn them. Mike taped them so that they could take the tape and learn the songs. It was a great time of singing and fellowship. At one point I looked around and saw Alsen, Daniel, Flexon, Fiona, Patrick, and Ruth and thought, "Wow- I am looking at the future of the church in Vanuatu!" That's exciting.

Saturday, January 7th – Eric and I spent a couple of hours this morning and a couple of hours this afternoon building some bookcases. We had a great time working together – we make a pretty good team. :o) When we were finished this afternoon we were pleased with the results. They look pretty good. I put one in our room with my books and one in the middle room.

While we were working, I twisted my ankle – again! I guess I have a tendency towards clumsiness! It really hurt. I spent the evening with it propped on a pillow and ice. Hopefully tomorrow it will feel better. It usually does the second day.

Sunday, January 8th – What a wonderful day of worship and fellowship. It was the complete opposite of last week (in attendance). Almost every Christian was there, including the four new Christians from Etos (and about 10 kids from Etos). It was a full house, children’s Bible class and adult Bible class were both really good, the singing was great, Steven preached a really good sermon, and the fellowship meal after the service was really good. Everyone is really excited about the new Christians and are trying to get to know them. It’s really encouraging to see the “old” and “new” Christians mingling and making an effort to get to know one another. That’s so important.

This afternoon I spent a lot of time working on Bible class materials for when I start teaching Seselo and Noel in February. I colored, planned and had a good time thinking about it and planning for it.

Monday, January 9th – Spent pretty much the entire day (except when we went grocery shopping) working on Bible class stuff. I spent pretty much the entire day (except when we went grocery shopping) working on Bible class stuff.

Tuesday, January 10th – This afternoon Winnie (from Epau) came to stay at our house. Her brother is in the hospital and her mom and dad wanted her to come stay with us and cook her brother’s lunch and dinner every day for him. She will stay through Saturday and then go back to the village. She’s such a sweet young lady and I always enjoy her visits.

Later this afternoon we heard that some young mother gave birth to a baby girl and then abandoned her. Some man found her and brought her to the hospital. When Cindy and I heard about it we decided to go up to the hospital and see if there was anything we could do to help. We knew that the nurses would be busy so they wouldn’t be able to give her the extra nurturing she would need. We went and asked about her and asked if there was anything we could do to help. She said, “Thank you very much,” handed us a bottle and asked us to feed her. We spent about an hour and a half feeding, holding and loving on her. Cindy went home to watch Kaela b/c Aaron had some studying to do and I stayed for a few more hours just holding her and loving on her. She was so precious. Our biggest concern was that there be someone who would want to take her home and love her. We shouldn’t have been worried. There were lots of people who wanted her. In fact, the nurses wouldn’t really let anyone hold her and carry her because of that. But, since we are missionaries and came to help them, she asked us to take care of her for a while. We were pleased to help and get an opportunity to love on this precious little girl. I’ll go back in the morning to check on her and take a few things for her (a blanket, some onesies, cloth diapers, etc.)

Wednesday, January 11th - This morning I went back down to the hospital to check on the baby. She was sleeping soundly so I didn’t pick her up, but just left some things for her. I spent some time visiting with some of the “mamas” in the maternity ward. It’s such a neat place – it’s like a sisterhood. Because we spent so much time there last night we got to know some of the mamas. I enjoyed visiting with two of them especially. One works at the market selling jewelry and the other was a very religious woman who was neat to talk to. I hope our paths cross again someday and that this “friendship” that was started in the maternity ward will grow into an opportunity to teach them the gospel.

When Cindy and I went to the grocery store this morning, we got hit in the parking lot. We had backed out into the driving part and then a big white (new) truck backed right into us – hit our rear driver’s side door). We were both in a state of shock, thankful that no one got hurt, but not really knowing what to do. In the US everyone knows what to do, but here it’s different – and to top it off, they didn’t have insurance (because it was a government vehicle). So, we

got his name, his place of work and his phone number. He asked if we wanted to get it fixed at a garage and we said “yes” but that we would need to talk to Aaron first. He said something about us backing into him and I quickly corrected him that he was the one who had backed into us. We were already in the driving part and had the car in first gear when he backed into us. I asked him, “Did you even look behind you before you started backing up?” He said, “No.” So, that was that. He wasn’t upset and we weren’t mad or anything, but I wanted him to know that he was the responsible party, not Cindy. Anyway, when Aaron gets home, he will take care of it.

This afternoon I worked on a Bible study, made a skirt and cooked. Later we found out that the mid-week fellowship was going to be at Aaron and Cindy’s because Shem called and asked them to take his place this week. Rose’s grandfather died and they were going to her family’s house for the “ded” (which and of the customs surrounding the death of someone – including the funeral). Flexon, Fiona, Winnie, Morris, and four of his grandkids came. We sang for a while and then ate and talked. It was a good evening. I just wish more people would take the opportunity to fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thursday, January 12th – This morning I went to study with Joanna and Fiona. We studied two parables from Matthew 13 (the sower and the dragnet). They are such good reminders that we need to make sure our hearts are soft and ready to respond to God’s word and that even after you are a Christian, you still need to listen and do what God teaches in His word. This afternoon Aaron, Cindy and I went to the police station to file a report – they told us that it was easiest to just ask the man to pay for the damage and that way it wouldn’t have to go to court. He said he knew this man (because he works at the courthouse) and that he thought that he would just pay for it with no problem. Hopefully that’s the case and the issue will be resolved.

This evening we watched Kaela so Cindy and Aaron could go out for their anniversary. We ate dinner on the front porch (which is becoming the “norm” around our house) and stayed on the porch until dark so Kaela could play. We always have a fun time when Kaela stays with us and tonight was no exception.

Saturday, January 14th – Didn’t do a whole lot today. Winnie and I played Rummikub for about an hour or so this morning. I taught her to play it yesterday, and she really liked it. Then she asked Cindy and I to take her to the market b/c her brother got out of the hospital this morning so she was ready to go home. Later we found out that the transport didn’t have enough room for Winnie and Wilson (her brother) so Rosie (her mother) asked if Eric would take them out to Epau. He agreed to do so and off they went. Eric got some pictures of the Epau church building while he was out there. We are so excited about the new building and know that it will be a great tool for the Christians in Epau.

This afternoon I began getting the tracts and DVDs ready that we are handing out at the next Preaching in the Park. They are DVDs that Mike Scott from “Scripturessay.com” sent us per Eric’s request. Anyway, I cut the tracts to fit in the CD envelopes, put stickers on the DVDs, stuffed the envelopes with the tract and DVD, and put a sticker on the back of the envelope explaining it in Bislama. It was kind of fun – I enjoy that kind of office work (you know, mindless repetition). :o)

This evening we watched a movie and relaxed together. It was a nice evening.