



Mission Vanuatu

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

July 2007
Volume 4,
Issue 7

Special points of interest:

- Local Christians step up to the microphone
- School's out in Etas Village
- Brandells returning to Vanuatu just as Bakers getting ready to leave for the States.

Inside this issue:

Good News Meeting	1
School Break	3
Mike's Musings	4
Brandells Return	5
One comes...one goes	5
Upcoming trip to Tanna	5

Good News Meeting in Etas Village

By Aaron Baker

As part of the maturation process, Christians in Etas village wanted to share their faith. Located 15 minutes drive outside the capital city of Port Vila lies the indigent community of Etas.

The congregation in Etas was planted in early 2005 and has grown to around 15 souls being converted to Christ. Each Sunday attendance averages over 20 adults with many visitors each week. One may be content with such a blessed beginning for the church in Etas, but the Christians there were not content—they wanted to share their faith!

In April of 2007, Aaron met with one of the leading men of the church in Etas, named Sam Tabawa, and we discussed how we could share the saving message of Jesus Christ within the community. The idea was born in April to have a Good News Meeting in Etas village. The Christians were excited.

From April 8th through April 15th (Sunday to Sunday) we held a meeting each evening from about 6—9pm. Lessons were presented and time was allowed for a question and answer session. Many people asked genuine questions wanting to know about salvation, baptism, miracles, drinking problems, etc. Truly the culture here in Vanuatu is such



Above: The tarp provided shelter for the week-long Good News Meeting in Etas Village.

that more teaching is done through answering questions than even through the lessons which were presented.

Our goal for this Good News Meeting before we began was to pass out fliers and hang posters to invite the entire community. Each night roughly 50 people were in attendance to listen to the lessons and question-answer session which followed. Interestingly, people in the Vanuatu culture are very shy—this was evidenced by very few people coming and sitting down by the lights, but the majority of people standing in the shadows and listening to the teaching of God's Word.

Our theme for the meeting was "The Plan of God." Here were our topics:

The point of the meeting was to show the village of Etas that indeed, God had a plan for each

(Continued on page 2)

Meeting, cont.

TOPIC	SPEAKER
History of the church in Vanuatu	Morris Felix*
Plan of God before the world	Mike Olson
Plan of God foretold	Mike Olson
Plan of God fulfilled by Christ	Aaron Baker
Plan of God for the church	Tom Iaruel*
Plan of God to save man	Eddie Karis*
Plan of God to give His Word	Flexon Robbie*
Plan of God for Christ's return	Aaron Baker

* indicates a local Ni-Vanuatu preached the topic for that evening

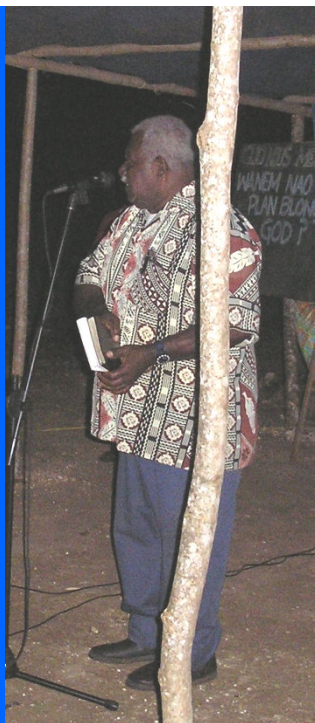
person's life! The lessons were well received and there was much positive feedback from the meeting.

Local Christians from Eton (Eddie Karis), Etas (Tom Iaruel), and Vila (Flexon Robbie) also helped in preaching the lessons in Etas. This was not only an opportunity to sew the seed of God's Word, but also the first time that Tom and Flexon had preached to an audience of that size in an evangelistic effort. It is often easy to preach to those who agree with your message (like those in the audience on Sunday mornings), but far more difficult and nerve-racking to preach to an audience who you are trying to convert. In all, Morris, Eddie, Tom and Flexon did a superb job of preaching and we are grateful for their help.

To hold a meeting like this we ran two generators— one which operated six fluorescent lights and one to operate a sound system.

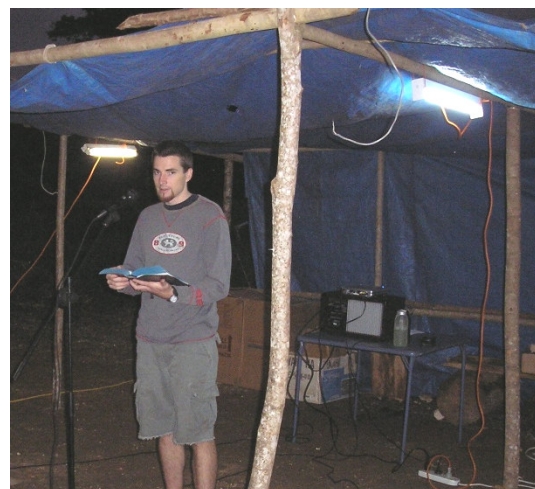
Now that the planting of God's Word has begun, the Christians in Etas will be busy following up with those interested in studying God's Word. Please pray that the harvest may be plentiful.

Below: Aaron preaching with the help of the sound system. The lessons could be heard throughout the community and were well received.



Above: Morris from Eton village standing at the mic to preach his lesson at the Etas Good News Meeting.

Below: Good News Meeting setup included generators, tarps, sound system and blackboard



School Break

By Cindy Baker

As many of you know, last year I began a school in Etas village to teach local children how to read and write. I noticed there were so many children running around Etas village and only a handful of them were enrolled in school. School fees are high in Vanuatu and so many families just forego getting their kids an education. That, coupled with the fact that Etas village is located quite a distance from any school means that many of these kids are reaching their teenage years and are unable to even spell their own name. So, as a result, I mentioned something about this to some of the Christians in Etas and I was met with much enthusiasm and urging to start this school.

This is the second year that the school ran. School began on March 19th with 37 students and ended on July 6th.

In order to tackle such a large group, Leimawa and I broke the students into two groups: first and second year students.

First year students worked with Leimawa on learning the alphabet. They focused on letter identification, letter

sounds and writing.

I worked with second year students reviewed letters of the alphabet they learned in year one and also worked on improving their reading skills.

Teaching school provided me with several challenges to work through. I finished the year with only 27 of my 37 kids. Drop-outs are common in this country where education is many times a matter of "whether or not the child feels like going".

Another challenge in teaching this year came in that I changed my curriculum from what I did last year and that always requires more work and preparation for each class. But, overall my changes were successful and I was proud of what many of the kids were able to accomplish.

The other major challenge I faced was trying to pull off another year while being pregnant. All the preparation involved plus going to the village twice a week made me fairly well exhausted most of the time. I couldn't have made it through without the help of Aaron who was supportive

of my work and very helpful when I was feeling tired!

It was another great year teaching the kids that I love. They are all so special to me and I'm thankful for the time that I was able to spend teaching them!



Above: First year students holding up their clipboards and workbooks as they prepare for class. Clipboards and pencils were donated by the Christiansburg church of Christ in Virginia and were very beneficial to the students.



Above: Second year students showing off their work as class winds to an end. Co-teachers Cindy and Leimawa supervise from the rear as kids smile for the camera. Say cheese!



Above: Last day of school is always the best! As a treat, the kids squeeze in tight to watch the movie *Aladdin*.

Mike's Musings

The Ni-Vanuatu people are by nature very generous. If you go to their houses you will always be greeted, given food and a place to sit down and rest. Even those who don't have much will never fail to give. In response to this generosity, what should we do? The advice which we received from other missionaries was simply to return the favor. When you have the opportunity, open your houses to them. To this end we, as the mission team, have always had a "open door" policy, not only to return the favor but also to use what God has given to us in a Christ like manner (Mark 9:41). Last month a young Christian named Morgan was attending the Pacific Islands Bible College classes and I found out that he had no place to stay here in town and was in fact sleeping wherever he could. I told him to come and stay at the house with me until he found a place of his own.

Having a local stay with you is both blessing and curse. It is a blessing because you have a chance to get to know that person better, to study the Bible, and to have a friend to talk to. But also it can be a *curse* because folks that grew up and live in the village don't really know how to live in a house. They have never used keys, locks, light switches, showers etc... Not only is this true but they are also out of their environment and afraid that they will do something wrong, break something, or use some-

thing they shouldn't use. All of this adds up to a rough beginning. You have to teach the person how to use things and then convince them that it is okay to use, eat, drink what is in the house. Eventually they will have to fend for themselves as you cannot "mother" them forever. This was the case with Morgan when he first came. It doesn't matter how much you say, "feel free to use whatever is in the house" it takes a while for folks to get comfortable. The next chore is to make folks understand that things in the house need to be used responsibly. They turn on the hot water and it just keeps coming out, why not stand here for 30 minutes? Actually no one is trying to be wasteful but they also don't think about the fact that it costs money for the hot water and someone else is paying. The same goes for food and electric power, use it, but use it responsibly. These are good lessons for anyone and they also show folks that we are not a bottomless pit of money. Then there is giving the person their own key and trusting them to lock up and safeguard your house. Fortunately with the proper instruction there has not been a problem.

Besides Morgan, I get other visitors during the month. Patrick, Ruth, baby Mary, and Patrick's sister Sophie come and stay once or twice a month usually for one day. Eddie from Eton comes every now and then so I give up

my room for these folks and sleep on the couch. Housing and feeding folks is my way of returning the favor but even more so it is my way of returning the love given to me and doing good especially to the household of God (Galatians 6:10).

July has also meant evangelistic studies with a young woman named Leila who has been visiting with the church for a few months now and is friends with some of the members. I have been studying with her on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays during her lunch time. She understands the teaching and has learned much. However this doesn't always mean she will accept the teaching. Many folks hear but don't obey for various reasons, but cultural struggles are the hardest to overcome. She is technically a member of the 7th Day Adventist church and while she has been visiting with the Lord's body, she has also been "observing the Sabbath". After studying the Sabbath she realized that she was not observing it correctly and that it was now finished. In fact I made several studies relating to the old and new laws in the Bible to try and show her what is true for today. At the writing of this letter she has heard the gospel and is at the point of deciding what to do. Will she be able let go of the past and the cultural and family pressures to obey? Stay tuned for next month's update.

By Mike Olson



Above: Morgan was glad to stay with Mike while finding a place to live.

"...Morgan was attending the Pacific Islands Bible College classes and I found out that he had no place to stay..."



Above: Patrick and Ruth Kasso appreciate Mike's hospitality as they come to town maybe once a month.

Brandell's Return to Vanuatu

The Brandells departed from Vanuatu on June 3rd for their furlough to the States. As this would be Titus' first time to meet his grandparents, all were eager for the trip.

While in the States, the

Brandells have enjoyed visiting their families, friends and supporters. They have also enjoyed eating American foods and going to American stores one misses so dearly in Vanuatu.

Now that their time is drawing to an end in the

States, the Brandells will depart from the States on August 13th. Transiting through Fiji, they will actually return to Vanuatu on August 15th.

Please pray for the Brandells safe trip back to Vanuatu.



Titus has enjoyed meeting his grandparents. Nancy Gray (Shawnda's mother) is overjoyed to play with Titus.

One comes...one goes

By Aaron Baker

As the Brandells are returning to Vanuatu, we are gearing up for our own departure. For Cindy and I this trip will not be as much a furlough as it will be a long trip to the hospital.

We are getting ready to have our second child. Due to deficient medical care in Vanuatu, we will head to the States to have our second child.

On September 2nd, we

will depart Vanuatu and head Stateside. Due to airline regulations, we have to leave one month before Cindy's due date, which is tentatively October 17th.

The plan is for us to stay with Cindy's folks in Ft. Smith, AR until the baby comes. While we will have a chance to visit some of our family and supporters, it will simply be impossible to visit everyone we would like

to visit as we plan to travel as little as possible both before and after we have this baby.

We pray that you keep our trip in mind and pray for our health and safety—especially that of Cindy and the baby.

For more information regarding our travel schedule, make sure to look at the website at: www.missionvanuatu.com

“...this will be an opportunity for these Christians to share the Gospel with their family.”

Upcoming Trip to Tanna

By Aaron Baker

On August 18th a group will head by ship to the island of Tanna to sew the seed of God's Word. A group of about 5 Christians will accompany Aaron on an expedition to preach the Gospel on Tanna.

Home to many from Etas village on Efate Island, this will be a homecoming for several members of the church in Etas. Also, this will be an opportunity for these Christians to share the Gospel with their family. Future plans for our

team are to continue to visit Tanna and eventually plant the church.

Pray for this trip as it is a 'groundbreaking' trip to sew the seed of God's Word. We pray that the seed may fall on soft hearts, willing to grow and produce for the Lord.



Home to active volcanoes, Tanna is a fascinating place to visit. This trip, we'll be taking the Gospel to Tanna.

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

Mission Vanuatu Minutes
A ministry of the
Columbine church of Christ
7453 S. Zephyr Ct
Littleton, CO 80128

Please send address changes and
inquiries to:
Shane Moore
samlpam@msn.com

**Spreading the Gospel in
the South Pacific**

Columbine church of Christ
7453 S. Zephyr Ct.
Littleton, CO 80128

Address Correction Requested

Check us out on the web!

www.missionvanuatu.com

Mission Vanuatu Team



**Aaron, Cindy and Kaela
Baker**

(Right side of picture)

**Eric, Shawnda and Titus
Brandell**

(Left side of picture)

Mike Olson

(Back row, middle)