



Mission Vanuatu

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

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BAPTISMS IN VANUATU

By Mike Olson

Special points of interest:

- Tamata and Leila converted to Christ
- Brandells return to Vanuatu
- Aaron takes 4 Christians from Etas to plant the church on Tanna island

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Tamata

Living in the United States means freedom, self determination, the right to do as you please within the law. There is very little which may hinder our decisions outside of our own consciences. The same is not true in Vanuatu. As we have written many times, cultural pressures often hinder decisions made by a good conscience. This is particularly true in regard to becoming a true, New Testament Christian here in Vanuatu.

Back in January, while visiting Marou village on Emau island, I was directed by one of the brethren to Lausake village to the home of Tamata and Mary. After eating some fresh caught fish and a helping of yam, I talked with this couple about the church in the New Testament, baptism, and a variety of topics which covered their questions. I was headed to the States a few weeks later but promised to go back and see them in the future. Our paths crossed again while Eric and I were making a quick visit to Marou village to meet with the local Christians On August 29th and 30th. Tamata and Mary were in the village due to the death of a relative and this gave us opportunity to study once again. Eric and I sat and studied and talked with them for 1½ hours about salvation, baptism (which was a source of plenty confusion) and mostly commitment. The gospel is not hard to understand nor is understanding what one must do. But Eric and I spoke extensively about the need to stay faithful which means making a



Above: Eric shows George how to baptize Tamata.

break from the Presbyterian denomination and/or any other group in their village. We explained that we do not face the same obstacles and understand that their decision may have an expensive cost to count. Many of the Christians in Marou are struggling with the same problem so they served as an appropriate example of what we were talking about. Eric encouraged them to take time to think about it but also stressed that we are not promised tomorrow and if they know what is right, they need to act on it ASAP. We finished with a prayer and Tamata soon approached us as he had made his decision.

Tamata was baptized into Christ on August 30th at Marou village. Back in January I felt that he and Mary were good prospects and I am excited to begin working with Tamata. He has a tremendous challenge ahead of him

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BAPTISMS, CONTINUED

but the Lord is greater. Mary will continue to count her cost and ultimately decide whether to join her husband in the Lord's church. Please pray for Tamata that he may endure through hard times and be a light to his village. Amen.

Leila

The majority of converts in Vanuatu are the result of being family or friend of a current member. Such was the case with Leila Bati who is originally from Malekula Island. She has been attending since February and is friends with Flexon and Fiona. Besides her attendance at worship and other church functions, it was clear that she is spiritually minded and a hard worker.

We began studying at her request in early June after a young man's baptism in to the church peaked her interest. We studied three times a week for a about a month. Leila was formerly a member of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination for 8 years and continuing to hold to their practices including keeping the Sabbath. This denomination does an effective job of making their members strong in the beliefs of the denomination. But after studying the Sabbath and other topics she began to feel a change in her conscience about what she had formerly believed. She realized that she was not actually keeping the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was in fact finished at the cross. She now had a proper understanding of food laws and tithing and realized the error of her beliefs. A person's sincerity comes to light when confronted by the truth. Either they realize and ac-



cept the truth no matter the cost, or they deny plain Scripture (Matthew 21:44). She already had much to think about, family and cultural aspects, and we were nearing the final study.

By the time we had finished all of our studies, the last one asking her to count the cost, she took about a week to think it over before concluding it was time to put off the old and put on the new, "to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). She was baptized into Christ on August 11th at Malapoa Point.

2Co 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Please continually pray for Leila and the church here in Vanuatu.

At Home and Abroad

By Eric Brandell

Shawnda, Titus and I made the long haul from Vanuatu to the United States, via Auckland, New Zealand, on June 2 (our anniversary, no less). The trip always takes a full day of air travel and layovers, with adult tickets averaging about \$1,500 each for the roundtrip.



A purpose of a missionary's "furlough" (leave of absence) is usually two-fold: [1] reporting & fundraising, and [2] resting & visiting with family & friends.

There are two vital parts to any mission work: someone to go and someone to send (Rom 10:14-15). Thus, a missionary must always be concerned about those who are sending him to preach the gospel. That means it is very important that he effectively communi-

cate with his current supporters. There is no better way to do this than a personal visit to report. Our family has been blessed with wonderful supporters - both congregations and individuals. We thoroughly enjoyed opportunities to preach, teach, meet and make presentations to all of

our supporting congregations (29th & Yale, Cherry Vista, Chisholm Trail, Columbine, Eastside, Rye). Our level of support has not fluctuated significantly since we took the field over two years ago,

but our needs have increased recently due to regular inflation, a growing family, and the devaluation of the US dollar. In that vein, we were fortunate to also make presentations or meet with congregations who might consider supporting us in the near future (Brentwood, Glenpool, Miller Street, Perkins, Ripon).

Secondly, we cherished opportunities to spend time with dear loved ones during our stint in the US. Of utmost enjoyment was the

pleasure of introducing everyone to our new son, Titus. Along with family and friends, we enjoyed devotionals, movies, meals, parks, Disney World, Branson, sporting events, hikes, shopping, games, and visiting. We also received some great news just before we departed: we're expecting! The tentative due date for Baby Brandell #2 is March 26. What an exciting way to finish up a great trip.

Returning home after a furlough is always a bit of a challenge, due to the change of pace and culture. This is especially true when you are dealing with countries that are as varied as the United States and Vanuatu. We are happy to be back at home, and look forward to getting back into the swing of things as we continue our kingdom service here in Vanuatu.





With our supplies loaded in the truck, we headed for Loun village where held Bible studies every night.

"...braving the open ocean on a boat no longer than 70 feet was quite an interesting feat, one I hope to never repeat!"

Below: the landlubbers hug the dry ground after spending all night on the ship to Tanna.



TRIP TO TANNA ISLAND

By Aaron Baker

Many Christians in the Etas congregation are originally from the island of Tanna. Since learning the Gospel themselves in 2006, the congregation in Etas couldn't wait until they had the chance to go to their home island and share the Gospel with their own family who still lived on the island of Tanna.

In April of this year we began making plans to go to Tanna, an island located 125 miles south of the capital city, Port Vila. I planned to take four men with me to Tanna: Tom, Sam, Iata, Jake. I chose these four men since 1) they knew the local language, 2) this was their home village, 3) Iata and Jake are older men who are well respected within their community, and 4) because their involvement in evangelizing their own community would mean so much to them.

Our original goal was to leave for Tanna on August 18th. However, since we were travelling by ship and the ship was delayed, our departure was pushed back to the 23rd. Thus our trip to Tanna was from the 23rd through the 29th.

Taking a boat from Efate (the island on which we live) to Tanna was quite a trip itself. 16 hours of braving the open ocean on a boat no longer than 70 feet was quite

an interesting feat, one I hope to never repeat! We departed Port Vila at 12 noon on the 23rd and arrived at 6am on the 24th. With waves crashing over the boat all night and people everywhere getting sick, it was not a fun trip on the boat (no, I didn't get sick).

Upon arriving in Tanna at Lenakel wharf, we located a transport and rode in a truck to Loun (pronounced "Low-oon") village we unloaded our things, met the chief and prepared for our Gospel Meeting which was to be held each night.

Because of a shortage of water, we had to walk 1.5 hours to get enough water to cook, drink and bathe. Tanna island is home to a live volcano which dumped ash on us each day, which in turn caused severely dry conditions throughout our time in Tanna.

The Gospel Meeting, or "Gudnius Miting" as it is called in Bislama, was a success. Studies

Below, L to R: Sam, Jake, Tom and Iata go with Aaron to Tanna to plant the church



TRIP TO TANNA, CONTINUED

were held nightly beginning around 6pm and ending around 10pm. We would have one hour of singing and then two lessons each night. Each lesson was about an hour long and at the end, time was allotted for questions.

The village of Loun is unique in that it is truly searching for the truth. In fact, the village had built a structure they called "United Divine Church." This was their attempt to "Unite" the community in faith while giving praise to God, hence the "Divine". Though they did not fully understand the Bible, they at least understood enough that they knew the truth was important and was to be sought after.

I was invited, through Tom, Sam, Iata and Jake's help, to speak to the community about the plan of God. I covered topics ranging from God's plan for mankind before He created the world, through the time following creation, coming until the time of Christ and His establishment of His church. I stressed the fact that there is only one way to have "unity" : by going back to the Bible and following it alone.

The lessons reverberated deep within the hearts of those present and many were challenged to obey the truth. The chief, named Kiel, was truly touched by these lessons and humbly admitted, "for a long time we have

been outside the plan of God. It is time for us to obey Him and follow Him."

In a culture which just over one hundred years ago killed white missionaries who set foot on their island, the winds of change had shifted. Now, at the close of our Gospel Meeting there were tears as they begged me to stay longer and teach them more about God's Word. Unfortunately, I was to return to Vila on the 29th and then leave for the U.S.A on the 2nd of September, so my time was cut short.

Each day, Sam, Tom, Iata and Jake would talk for hours with leading men from the village, pouring over the lessons which I had taught. They were encouraging the men to simply "follow the Bible and nothing else".

I was truly blessed to be able to go to Tanna. Not only was it a trip in which we sowed the Seed of God's Word, but I was able to work closely with these four men from Etas in their home village in an attempt to plant the church on the island of Tanna. Our goal in 2008 is to plant the church in the village of Loun: a village where the church has never been before. While we did not start the church on this trip, at least we left the village knowing what God's plan was for their lives. Please pray for this church planting effort to succeed smoothly in the future.



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Check us out on the web!

www.missionvanuatu.com

Mission Vanuatu Team



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(Right side of picture)

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Brandell**

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Mike Olson

(Back row, middle)