



Mission Vanuatu

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

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Special points of interest:

- Updates on the Vila, Etas and Epau congregations show positive signs of progress.
- Christians in Marou village make a strong decision to separate themselves from denominations
- Bakers still awaiting their bundle of joy.

Inside this issue:

Congregational Updates	1
Emau Island—Marou Village	3
Still Waiting...	3

Congregational Updates

By Eric Brandell

We thought it would be beneficial to take some time this month to provide a general update on some of the congregations we work alongside regularly here in Vanuatu.

Port Vila

We are excited to report that progress is once again being made on the church building and grounds. September saw the completion of the toilet block, which is a separate building encompassing the bathrooms and a storage room. Claude oversaw the construction and installation of security gates on the doors, and Patrick provided some much needed guidance and muscle in regard to the plumbing. By month's end, the bathrooms were fully-functional. This will add great convenience for the congregation, and will allow us to begin spending much more time together on Sundays. We look forward to more progress next month, and continue to believe that the completion of the building will serve as a boost to the congregation and her work.

Both Claude and Flexon were out of town for several weeks at the end of the month, which was admittedly a challenge. However, several others stepped up when needed, especially some visiting Christians. Attendance continues to hover around 18 adults for morning worship, with several Christians only sporadically present. The majority of the crowd is normally women, visitors and children, which makes for a unique experience, especially in regard to leading worship. We missionaries would of course prefer to have locals leading every facet of the worship services, but to date that is still not possible. Nonetheless, we are very grateful for those who con-



Above: Christians in Port Vila gather for worship.

tinue to show an interest in growing closer to God.

We are especially excited about a lady named Carol who lives close to the church building. She has been attending services fairly regularly, and always brings a few adults and several kids along with her. Shawnda has talked to her about setting up a personal Bible study, and we hope that will start soon.

Prayer requests for Port Vila: building project completion, those who have fallen away, Claude and Flexon as leaders, and Carol as a prospect.

Etas

You may recall that the congregation in Etas Village was started in early 2006, as a result of some group Bible studies led by Aaron and Cindy. That congregation has grown considerably since then, both numerically and spiritually. Though relatively young, the church in Etas is functioning very well. They worship faithfully each Sunday, often without the presence of a missionary or other helper, with an average attendance of approximately 12-15 adults. Three or four of the men have proven themselves to be very good preachers of the Word, and several different men lead various aspects

(Continued on page 2)

Congregational Updates, continued...

of the worship. The congregation participates in a weekly Bible study each Wednesday night as well, led by Mike and myself while Aaron is in the States.

Recently, a Christian family in Etas experienced a problem due to some miscommunication and a resulting misunderstanding. Such "mole-hills" can really turn into mountains here in Vanuatu if not handled appropriately. However, the husband stated to me several times that, "we must deal with this in a Christian manner," and requested that Shawnda and I assist them in doing so. What a joy it is to see relatively new converts seeking to allow the word of God to be their compass. We are glad to report that the problem was handled well by this family...another testimony to the wisdom and power of God.

Prayer requests for Etas: the need for a new meeting place, continued strengthening and edification of new members, wisdom for the congregation's spiritually young, but capable, leaders

Epau

The congregation in Epau Village was established several years before we came to Vanuatu. As such, we have sought to carefully balance our work there, so as not to cause them to become reliant upon us. The Christians in Epau continue to worship faithfully each Sunday with an average attendance between 12-15 adults. The older men are making an attempt to incorporate the younger men into leadership and service roles. This is often difficult in Vanuatu, as age is highly respected, and it's almost counter-cultural for a man to lead something (religious or otherwise) when an older man is present. To assist them, they've requested that I hold some seminar-type lessons on



Above: Christians in Etas village have continued to mature and develop into spiritual leaders.

leading worship. These have proven to be effective, with some men leading prayers or songs for the first time as a result of the studies.

It may be difficult for an American to imagine, but continually fostering an evangelistic spirit can be difficult in a small village after several years. The mindset that everyone that is interested has already been reached is hard to avoid. Soon, we will begin holding some studies on how this congregation can evangelize in its community, seeking to reignite the desire to be a light in Epau.

Prayer requests for Epau: current and future leaders, evangelism efforts, Christians that have fallen away from the faith.



Above: Christians in Epau village gather for evangelistic training classes led by Eric.

The congregation in Vila continues work on its building project began in 2006. Pictured **above**, the toilet structure must be locked securely. Basins were installed, pictured **below**, that will enable Christians to spend more time together in fellowship at the Vila building.



Emau Island—Marou Village

By Mike Olson

The bulk of our work in Marou village over the past several months has been to convince the existing Christians to be faithful to the one true church and not to participate with denominations. This is made more difficult in a small, close-knit community like Marou because of cultural and familial pressures. The village chief would like the four existing groups in Marou to have “unity” and worship together on a weekly basis. We know from the Scriptures that we cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24), therefore the choice between God’s unity (Eph 4:1-6) or man’s unity (everything is good) must be made by the Christians in Marou. Thankfully a handful have decided to choose the more difficult road and continue worshipping as the Lord’s body and not join with the unscriptural denominations meeting in the village. While for the moment some have not yet chosen to do this, it is our hope and prayer that the rest will see a group holding strong in the face of the same kind of pressures and join once

again. The teaching we have been doing is to “strengthen what remains” (Rev 3:2) and encourage others to follow in the path of the brethren who have made a break from societal pressures. These folks need your prayers as they are continually inundated with false teachings and the trials associated with being a faithful Christian.

On another matter, I had a chance to visit the man baptized in late August, Tamata, from Lausake village. I made the 30 minute trek to the village and gave him some Lord’s supper supplies and a notebook full of studies on worship, faithfulness, the church, old and new covenants, and some foundational studies on the Bible. We ate lunch and studied about forgiveness and I answered some questions. Usually folks hear a bunch of crazy stuff on the radio and the talk goes all over the place and I get asked whether these things are true or not. Tamata’s wife, Mary, is still considering her decision to become a Christian so please continue to pray for both.

Still Waiting for the Baby...

By Aaron Baker

The main reason we are in the States (arrived Sept. 2nd) is to have a baby. We are due on Oct. 17th and hope the baby comes on time. While doing our best to wait patiently for this baby to come, we have enjoyed visiting with our friends, families and supporters whenever we are able.

One such visit to the Garriott Road church of Christ in Enid, Oklahoma was an especially fun time. We stayed with Robert and Molly Heyen (he is the family minister at Garriott Road and Cindy’s cousin) and enjoyed swimming in their pool. Kaela loved playing with the swimming goggles and dipping her toes into the water, but was afraid to “take the plunge.”

Since arriving in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, Kaela has really enjoyed helping her grandpa, Cindy’s dad, work on some projects around the house. Pictured right, Kaela helps grandpa drive some screws into a post.

All indications from the doctor show that Cindy and the baby are both healthy. We just pray that all continues to go well until the baby decides to grace us with her presence soon. Rest assured that when the baby arrives, we’ll let you know!



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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)