



# Mission Vanuatu

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

December 2007  
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Issue 12

## 'Tis The Season

By Eric Brandell

### Special points of interest:

- **Christmas in Vanuatu**
- **Kiwis come for Christmas**
- **Local Christian preaches for his first time**
- **Bakers back in Vanuatu**
- **Kids of Mission Vanuatu grow up fast**

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While many “American” holidays have not yet made their way to Vanuatu, the Christmas and New Year’s holidays seem to be fairly universal. Both of these are celebrated here in Vanuatu and we as the mission team also did our part.

Our holidays this year were full of people and fun. Not only was the entire mission team, including the newest edition of Melia Baker, present in Vanuatu, but we also had the Raine family from New Zealand here in Port Vila. We have known the Raines since April 2005, the time we arrived in Vanuatu. They were here on holiday (vacation) and to see us. We all exchanged gifts on Christmas Eve which particularly excited the kids (young and grown-up). On Christmas day we emptied stockings and had a great meal. Each night we all have shared a meal and good times together in Christian fellowship.

Overall in Vanuatu, Christmas is not celebrated much different than what we see in the States. Obviously the

food is different, no traditional turkey or ham, the locals get chicken or beef to go with the traditional island accompaniments. Like everywhere it is a time to spend with family. Many non retail businesses close for the half of December and half of January allowing for folks to travel back to their home island and visit relatives they may not have seen in years.

If you were to look at the stores in Port Vila around Christmas you would see a very scaled-down version of what you are used to. There is plenty of Christmas music and ads trying to lure folk to buy as much as possible. It seems that kids are the main beneficiary of presents at Christmas.

Sadly one other imported aspect of holidays here in Vanuatu is alcohol and the excuse for bad behavior. Inevitably the local paper recounts auto accidents and other problems as a result of the “holiday spirit.”

Overall our time in this holiday season has been very enjoyable and we are looking forward to the New Year.

**Below:** Our team opens gifts on Christmas day in Vanuatu. **Kaela** tears into her presents as **Mike** enjoys his new pan. **Shawnda** helps open a new ball for **Titus**.





**Above:** (L to R) Antony, Jeremiah and Eric go golfing on New Year's eve. Even temps in the low 90s couldn't keep this group from enjoying a round of

## Friends from NZ visit Vanuatu

By Eric Brandell

**O**ur team was honored to host the Raine family from New Zealand, as they spent the Christmas and New Year holidays with us. We first met Antony shortly after our arrival in Vanuatu in



2005, when he volunteered himself to assist the Port Vila congregation in raising funds and constructing a building for the church to use. On that and subsequent visits we got to know him and his wife, Jeanette, very well. Their teenage boys, Kevin and Jeremiah, are also a pleasure to be around.

We have all had lots of fun visiting, opening presents, sharing meals, go-

ing to the beach, playing games and watching movies. Having the Raines with us has made it a little bit easier to be away from our own families during this time. This very generous family has been and continues to be such a blessing to our team. The fellowship we share with God's children is truly invaluable. Thanks, Raines, for a great time!

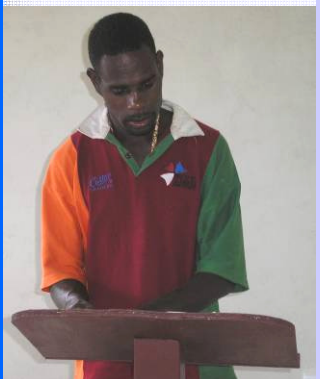
## Preach the Word!

By Mike Olson

**I** remember my first time preaching at Bear Valley Bible Institute back in 2003. I was scared of making a mistake, of saying the wrong thing, of looking bad in front of friends. Oddly enough those are the same feeling for Ni-Vanuatus who are asked to preach for the first time. Often time this prevents an individual from even attempting to preach but we are fortunate to have a gutsy few who have overcome their fear to begin preaching. The latest addition to the local preaching roster is Patrick Kasso.

Patrick and I have been working for months on how to study and make lessons and I recently encouraged him to take my Sunday and preach a lesson we just worked on. He said yes and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December he stood before his brothers and sisters in Port Vila and for the first time he *preached the word*. His lesson was only about ten minutes but ten minutes of truth is better than an hour of error or human wisdom. After the worship time several people commented on Patrick's preaching as he speaks boldly unlike the timid talk of most Ni-Vanuatus. We look forward to his continued growth and development in **preaching the word!**

**Below:** Patrick preaches his first sermon at the Port Vila church of Christ. Patrick was converted to Christ in 2005 and is working hard to become a strong Christian.



## Bakers return to Vanuatu

By Aaron Baker

**O**ur family was in the USA from September 2nd through December 9th. We came to the States for the birth of our daughter, Melia Madelyn, who graced us with her presence on October 24th. From that point on, we were working desperately to get our paperwork in order.

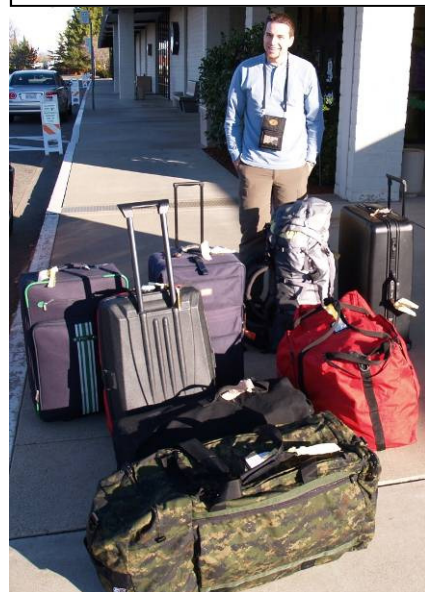
To return to Vanuatu, we needed Melia's birth certificate and a passport so she could enter Vanuatu. The birth certificate alone took 5 weeks, and the passport took one week following the receipt of the birth certificate. We expedited Melia's passport on December 3rd, then received it on the 7th, then left the states on the 9th! Talk about cutting it close. WOW!

We flew out of Redding, CA on Sunday, December 9th to begin our trek to Vanuatu. Following layovers in Los Angeles and Fiji, we arrived in Vanuatu on Tuesday, December 11th. We crossed the International Date Line on our way to Fiji, so Monday the 10th didn't even exist for us!

It sure was nice to get back to our home in Vanuatu and back to the work of winning souls for Christ. We missed the brethren in Vanuatu dearly and were so glad to see them again. We received a warm welcome from so many, that our spirits soared for days.

Please pray for us as we change gears from 'thinking like Americans' to try to 'think like the Ni-Vanuatu'. We pray as this year comes to a close we can remember our blessings and see how God has blessed our lives and strive to serve Him even more in 2008.

**Below:** Aaron is standing with our 8 BAGS checked through to Port Vila.



# Kids' Korner

This section of the newsletter is dedicated to the children on the Mission Vanuatu Team. We hope you enjoy these updates.

### Titus Taylor Brandell

As a bona fide one-year-old, Titus is really growing up! He insists on feeding himself, and is walking quite comfortably now. He is especially glad to have Kaela back in town to keep him company. We are gearing up to head to the States, with our departure scheduled for February 3. Titus is really looking forward to being a big brother!

### Kaela Sue Baker

Kaela was excited to return to Vanuatu and sleep in her own bed. She loved playing with her books, dolls and toys that were all but forgotten on our trip to the States. She loves to play with Titus (pictured R) as he now weighs as much as she does and she doesn't have to be as careful with him as when he was a baby.

### Melia Madelyn Baker

At Melia's six week check up she weighed 9.5 lbs! That's a gain of 2 lbs. since she was born. Melia has a healthy appetite and loves to smile, especially at night so mommy and daddy pick her up. She can coo with the best of them, but has a healthy set of lungs to let everyone know if something is wrong.



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**Check us out on the web!**

[www.missionvanuatu.com](http://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)