



Mission Vanuatu

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

December 2008
Volume 5,
Issue 12

Special points of interest:

- Evangelistic campaign planned for April-2009 on Emao Island
- Coming of age ceremony attended in Etas
- Dalton and Mary Beth Dietz visit the team in Vanuatu
- How Christmas is celebrated in Vanuatu

Inside this issue:

Christians in Emao Give Respect, Honor	1
Unique Custom Ceremony in Etas	2
Special Visitors	2
Christmas in Vanuatu	3
Kids Korner	3

Christians in Emao Give Respect, Honor

By Aaron Baker

*E*mao island is reached by driving 2 hours around the main island of Efate. Then, you climb in a 20' fiberglass boat that ferries you across the ocean on a 40 minute ride to arrive in Marou Village, on Emao island.

There are a handful of Christians who live and worship in this isolated village on Emao island. Our team had visited these Christians a few times this year and we saw the need for trying to meet with them each Sunday to strengthen their commitment to worship and to the Lord.

In October, our team began traveling weekly to Emao to teach and preach at the invitation of the local Christians. One of our teammates (Aaron, Eric or Mike) would leave early Sunday morning about 7 am, teach and preach in Emao, and then arrive back in Port Vila around 5 pm. Let me note here that Eric and Mike did most of the traveling and teaching. Our goal was to work with the brethren from October through the end of

the year to build up the Christians in Marou.

On December 20th, the Christians in Emao invited our team to share a meal with them. The Christians were thankful that we were able to come for three full months, visiting them each Sunday.

To our surprise not only did they have a huge meal prepared, but they also presented us with mats (a traditional way of saying "thank you") and a few island dresses and shirts. Though we cannot take all the credit for the idea to go visit them each week for three months as the idea originated with one of our mentors, Robert Martin, we were humbled by their gifts, appreciation and hard work.

For 2009 our team plans to visit the Christians in Emao each month, this way they can develop their own skills at teaching and preaching as well as to gain independence in leading their own worship each Lord's Day. In addition, we have planned an evangelistic campaign for April of 2009 with the goal of working with people from the village during the day and evangelistically preaching in the night. We ask that you join us in prayer that the brethren grow strong in the Lord and that we may reach out to the people in Marou village, on Emao island.

Below: Aaron, Eric, Titus and Mike are grateful with the respect and gifts given by the brethren in Marou village. While we didn't expect gifts, we humbly accepted their love and respect.



Below: Eric, Shawnda, Titus and Lexi wishing you all a Happy Holiday Season.



Below: Mike is all smiles as pictured here with Kaela on Christmas morning.



Below: Aaron, Cindy, Kaela and Melia wish you a Merry Christmas!



Unique Custom Ceremony in Etas

A highlight in our mission work here is being involved in the lives of the local Christians. When they weep, we weep. When they rejoice, we rejoice. When they have a custom ceremony to perform, we are invited.

This month a unique custom ceremony was in Etas village, 15 minutes outside of the capital city of Port Vila. This ceremony was to celebrate a girl's "coming of age", which happens when she reaches about 14 years old.

Sam Tabawa, a local Christian in Etas, was hosting this ceremony for his daughter, Miriam. This coming of age ceremony is rather lengthy and includes cutting the girl's back with a broken glass bottle, dressing her up with local decorations, whipping her with Taro leaves and making a payment of pigs, mats and kava to Sam's

in-laws. While many Americans may view this as cruel, Tanna island custom has been performing this tradition for centuries and is never done with a mean-spirited attitude. Rather, this is a time when the families draw close together and share a loving bond of Miriam's milestone in her life. Though an unusual custom to witness, we enjoyed this unique peek at the traditions and beliefs so different from our own.



Special Visitors

By Aaron Baker

What a blessing it is to be around family at Christmas time! However, if you are 10,000 miles away from family, what do you do? In our case, our family (at least part) came to us.

Dalton and Mary Beth Dietz, Cindy's parents from Fort Smith, AR, arrived December 16th to spend one month with their grandchildren, oh yeah, and the rest of our team! We are blessed to have them visiting to share the holidays not only because they are family, but also because of their wisdom. For example, Mary Beth is able to help Shawnda and Cindy organize their Bi-

ble class curriculum and visuals, and Dalton is busy helping Aaron with handyman projects around the house and is even helping advise our team on how best to lay tile at the church building in Port Vila come mid-January.



Christmas in Vanuatu

By Aaron Baker

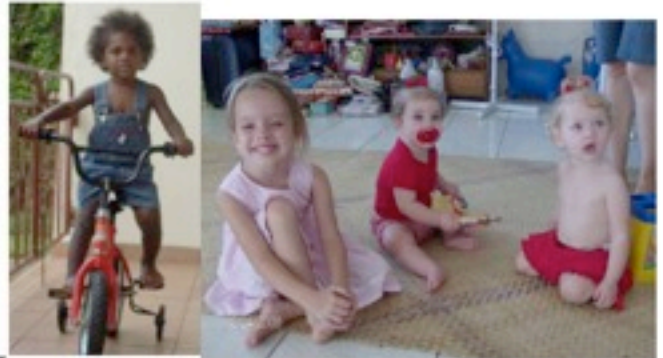
We are often asked, "What is Christmas like in Vanuatu?" A good question, one I will attempt to answer here.

First, Christmas in Vanuatu is hot. The middle of our summer months are December, January and February. This means in the day it hits 90 degrees and at night 75...all with 80% humidity or higher. Whatever you do, you do it with a good sweat.

Second, Christmas is not celebrated in Vanuatu as highly as the national holiday, Family day, which falls on the day after Christmas. Most Ni-Van families will eat together on Christmas day and then give gifts to their children on Family day, possibly at-

tending the yearly parade in Port Vila.

Third, our team holds some of our American customs and roots. Our team gathered on Christmas eve and on Christmas day to give gifts and enjoy the holidays. The kids loved opening their presents!



Kids Korner

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

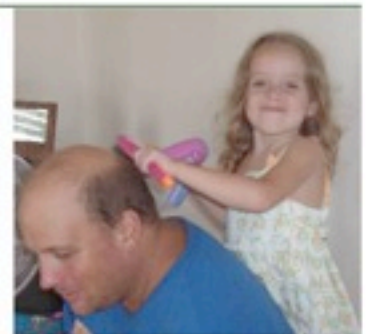
Titus Taylor Brandell

Three things Titus is scared of: Santa Claus, thunder, and the big-boy potty. Ha! Nonetheless, Titus had a wonderful month, with a few late birthday presents and lots of Christmas presents. His new favorite phrase is, "what are you doing?" The biggest news of the month is that Titus moved into his big-boy bed without a hitch. Of course, the Lightning McQueen bed sheets helped the transition considerably.



Kaela Sue Baker

December marks Kaela's school break. Kids are out of school until the start of February. Naturally, kids love the break and parents are ready for school to start again. Kaela really enjoyed Christmas time. Her favorite toy was a play hair-dryer. Pictured right, Kaela shows Mike how to style his hair to be more handsome. Thanks for the tip, Kaela!



Alexis Lynae Brandell

Lexi continues to grow by leaps and bounds, saying both "mama" and "dada" for the first time this month. She LOVES eating from the table (or the floor), especially pizza. Her new favorite activity is playing with whatever Titus is playing with (much to his chagrin). Lexi's big accomplishment this month was learning how to pull herself up on the furniture. It won't be long till she's walking!



Melia Madelyn Baker

Melia loves to play, as most one year olds do! When we gave Melia this blow up swimming raft, she couldn't wait to play in it. In fact, she didn't even wait to get to the swimming pool to use it. She crawled right in and had a great time laying in the raft...without ever getting near the water.

Of course, Melia loved opening Christmas presents. However, a Christmas Eve ear infection slowed Lia down a little bit, but not enough to keep her from enjoying all her gifts.

Also, Lia can stand up on her own and loves to repeat our actions as we clap and cheer her on!



**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:
Kevin Fennelly
kfenn10987@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



Mike Olson

(Left side of picture)

**Aaron, Cindy, Kaela and
Melia Baker**

(Middle of picture)

**Eric, Shawnda, Titus and Lexi
Brandell**

(Right side of picture)