



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



We did a lot of traveling this month, and really enjoyed snapping this photo of Titus and Lexi sitting in the back seat on the way to Epau. Thanks for taking the time to read this month's report.

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SUNDAYS IN MARCH

Aaron normally preaches in **Etas Village** every other Sunday, but he was "double booked" on March 1, so I filled in for him there. It was a pleasure to be back in Etas, getting reacquainted with several Christians whom we haven't seen in a while. I continue to be so proud of Tom and Alice as they grow spiritually and take on more and more responsibility serving the congregation. During the worship service, I preached a lesson on Immersion, emphasizing



From the home-front...

Our baby is one! I literally thought I'd never get through this first year of two under two... but we did it. Looking back, the time has flown by! It's still chaos sometimes around here, but we're beginning to see how much fun having two so close together will be. They love each other very much and we know they'll be the best of friends.

We had some fun visitors this month. Our friend, Paul, from the church in New Zealand (who lived & worked in Vila as a doctor for 4 months last year) came for two weeks on his honeymoon with his new wife, Kim. We were glad to get to know her and spend time with Paul once again.

I finished up the Bible class materials for the ladies in Epau village and delivered them this month. They were really appreciative. In fact, when we worshipped with them this month, I noticed Madeline (the teacher) using one of the visual aids that I included in the box. Seeing that made all of the hours of organizing, coloring, and preparing the materials worthwhile!

Please continue your prayers for all of us in Vanuatu.

Love,
- Shawnda



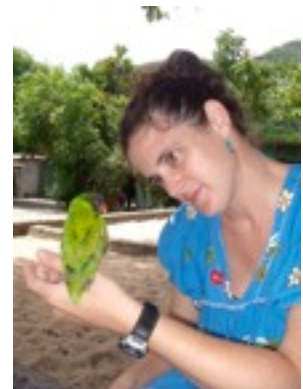
the *How, Who* and *Why* of Bible baptism. There were several visitors in attendance, which is always an encouragement to local Christians and missionaries alike. After services, while the ladies were preparing some food, Sam gathered several new Christians, visitors, and young boys to teach them some hymns. It was such joy to see someone we have taught teaching others (2 Timothy 2:2).

The next Sunday our family was scheduled to travel to **Marou Village**, which is a small village on the island of Emao (just off the northeast coast of the main island), but due to a “dead” the congregation said that we should not come. Vanuatu custom is such that when a person in the village dies, churches do not meet the following Sunday to show respect to the family (all such public gatherings are taboo). This is a perfect example of how culture and Bible are sometimes in disagreement. We have taught much on this subject, and continue to do so, but years and years of tradition can be difficult to overcome. We are patient with the brethren, but at the same time we desperately want them to act in accordance with God’s will rather than man’s. We were able to travel to Marou the following Sunday, taking along Eddie Karris from Eton Village. Eddie was one of the first converts in Vanuatu, back in 1980. His wife is from Marou, so he knows the village well, and is well respected by all the locals there. I taught a class on the danger of following religious leaders blindly (Matthew 15:14), which is another cultural aspect of Vanuatu that has been difficult for locals to overcome. Eddie preached from



Eddie preaching in Marou Village

Ephesians 2 during the worship service. We always appreciate the opportunity to take locals with us when we travel, and when they preach it is an added bonus. Eddie is spiritually mature and his biblical wisdom and willingness to share it are encouraging. After lunch, we met with the locals Christians to plan for the upcoming Gospel Meeting in Marou.



Shawnda holding a pet parrot in Marou

I preached in **Vila** on the 4th Sunday of the month, again delivering my sermon on Bible Baptism. While most local Christians are already familiar with the concepts in this lesson, it is important that they are constantly reminded of what the Bible teaches on the subject, because they are regularly bombarded with false teaching via television, radio and local religious leaders. Too, we have several who are visiting services fairly regularly who needed to hear this message. The congregation continues to struggle a bit due to a shortage of dedicated male members, but we’re glad that Claude and Flexon are willing and able to lead.

We traveled to **Epau Village** on the last Sunday of the month. There I preached a lesson entitled *Three Pictures of the Church from the Old Testament*, in which I consider the characteristics of Noah’s ark, the Israelite homes during the first Passover Feast and Rehab’s home, and the similarities to the New Testament church. The emphasis, of course, is on the importance of being and remaining inside. I chose to preach this lesson because I have been teaching a course on The Church in Truth Bible School in Epau, and had briefly mentioned these examples but did not have time to expound upon them during class time. The highlight of the day was the fact that Bob (converted in November 2005) was in charge of services that day, as Arthur was ill. To my knowledge, it was the first time for him to do so, and it included leading congregational singing. Again, it is so very encouraging to see local Christians growing in faith and maturity.



Children coming from Bible class, which was restarted in Epau only a couple of months ago

TRUTOK BAEBOL SKUL - VILA

The 5th Term of Truth Bible School ended this month after six weeks of study. Just before the last class period (final exams), our entire team went to the building with home made goodies and juice to express our appreciation to the students for making it such a great quarter. I would like to introduce you to those 15 students, especially to emphasize the sacrifices they are making to attend the TBS classes.

Patrick & Ruth live and work on a farm in the center of the island. Patrick had to make special arrangements with his boss to allow him to get off work early every Tuesday and Thursday so that he and Ruth can begin the 30 minute walk to where we pick them up. The truck ride to town is an additional 30 minutes. We drop them off at that same point around 9:30pm, which means they have another 30 minute walk (in the dark). We would take them all the way to their house, but regular rains make the roads impassable. That also means that their roundtrip walk is often in ankle- or knee-deep mud and water. I should also mention that Patrick is basically a professional cowboy, putting in a full day of hard work in the sun before these walks and sitting through classes.

Salome is from Etas, but recently began living with Patrick and Ruth "on top" when her husband divorced her. That means she too must walk the muddy road in order to attend classes. She also regularly sells produce in the market, at which times she sleeps on the cement floor overnight. None of this prohibits her from attending classes and being a dedicated student.

Daisy is from Ambae, but came to Vila several months ago to live with her children. Her husband had recently died and she had no other way to provide for herself. Her kids have not treated her well, but she had perfect attendance and scored well on her quizzes and homework in spite of her difficult personal situation.

Claude and his wife took Daisy into their home when she had no where else to go. He is very involved in politics and various business endeavors, but has put



Back row (left to right): Fiona, Ruth (Lexi), Salome, Daisy, Patrick, Alice, Kalsoko, Claude, Makitney and Tom.

Front row (left to right): Dan, Miswel, Jacob, Peter and Flexon.

these on hold in order to attend classes.

Tom & Alice live in Etas, about 15 minutes outside of Vila. Village life is physically demanding with gardens to tend, cutting grass by hand, and cooking over an open fire being everyday tasks. Tom and Alice travel to and from Vila for every

class, often not getting home until 9:30pm. They also have a young son that could be used as an excuse for Alice not to come, but she instead brings Dalton to class with her. She occasionally has to take him outside if he disrupts class, but at least she's present for the majority of the teaching.

Makitney is a single, young man who came to Vila from Ambae Island specifically to participate in TBS. It would have been much more convenient for him to simply stay in Ambae and say, "I wish they would come here and teach," but instead he made his way to Vila.

Flexon & Fiona live in Vila. Flexon is a mechanic and has to leave work early on Tuesday and Thursday in order to make it to class on time. This is a big step for a local, as he has to go against the grain a bit in requesting permission. Such would normally not be granted by an employer in Vanuatu, but since he is such a good worker his boss is willing to make an exception. Flexon puts in a full day's work of manual labor and often has to scarf down a quick bite before class, as he works through lunch and doesn't have time for dinner until after class.

Kalsoko is a single man from Eton who attends a technical school in Vila. He sits in class from 8:00 - 4:30, walks home, and usually arrives about the time we pass to pick him up. So, on Tuesdays and Thursdays Kal is sitting in a classroom all day long.

Miswel is a single man from Etas Village who invited his friends **Dan, Peter** and **Jacob** to attend classes with him. These young men work in their gardens and on other projects during the day, but always make it a point to be at the road in time to catch a ride to class. We hope Dan, Peter and Jacob will obey the gospel soon.

 TRUTOK BAE BOL SKUL - EPAU

The Bible School in Vila has been our most effective means of edifying, training and equipping Christians. So, we were excited when the brethren in Epau approached us requesting that we begin conducting classes in their village on Saturday mornings. That 1st term concluded this month, and I was very happy with how well it went. Eleven Christians completed the course, and while it was difficult for many of them to adjust to such an intense educational setting (most have less than a 9th grade education), they all did very well. They endured memory work, reading assignments, a writing assignment, 4 quizzes and a cumulative final exam. Another term has already been planned - Aaron will be teaching *How to Study the Bible* beginning April 25.



TBS - Epau students (Bob, Eddie & Arthur) drinking tea after taking their final exam.

 CONVERSIONS

We are excited to tell you about 3 conversions that took place in Vanuatu this month:



Paul and Willy live in Epau Village and were baptized into Christ on March 1. Paul lives with Willy and his parents (Christians), and have been visiting worship services for several months. They were also students in TBS. After hearing a sermon on Bible Baptism and a few of our TBS classes on the church, they made the commitment to join Christ. Now that TBS classes are finished, I am studying the Bible with these two young men 2-3 times per month to “disciple” them.

After studying with Cindy and Fiona for several months, **Josephine** was baptized into Christ on March 20. She lives near the church building, and was initially contacted when her sister, Carol, was converted. Her children began attending Bible class and worship before she did - they would walk

to the building by themselves or with other neighborhood kids.

You can read more about these and other conversions on our website.



 FAMILY UPDATE

Our family enjoyed celebrating Lexi's 1st birthday this month. Our entire team enjoyed sand, swimming, volleyball, lunch, cake and presents at a local resort. I am sure every parents says it, but the first year sure did fly by. What joy Alexis Lynae has brought to our lives! She began standing up unassisted for short periods of time this month, and since she received a “walking toy” for her birthday, I'm sure it won't be long before she's taking her first official steps. The big change this month was Lexi moving into a room with her big brother. They both accepted the change without a problem.

Titus' new favorite “game” is calling Uncle Mike on the phone. Thankfully, Uncle Mike willingly plays along. He's become quite fond of frozen corn and apples (now that mom peels them for him). We had to deal with some more breathing problems this month as Titus caught another cold, but the inhaler worked great (though Titus is convinced it some sort of ancient Chinese torturing device). We've received lots of comments on his preaching video. If you haven't seen it yet, you should visit our website and check it out.

Our family continues to visit local Christians in their homes each Wednesday evening, which we all enjoy. It's great that the kids are old enough that the whole family is able to go with me on my Sunday travels, though Shawnda still certainly has her hands full while I am up preaching. I think we have the two most rambunctious kids known to man! It can be frustrating, but we wouldn't trade them for anything.

We continue to keep all of our many supporters in our thoughts and prayers. We are especially attentive to the economic crisis the entire world faces. It is our prayer that you are all spiritually well first and foremost, but understand that physical and financial wellness are also very important. Please know how grateful we are to all of you for your continued thoughtfulness and faithful support. You are an integral part of everything that we do. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue this labor of love in Vanuatu. We'll leave you, as usual, with a few pics from the month...



We all enjoyed a visit from our good friend, Paul, and his new wife, Kim.