



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



Happy Birthday, Mommy! February brought a birthday celebration and warmer temperatures. We are pleased to have the opportunity to once again share what has gone on with our family. Thank you for your continued interest and support. Enjoy...

In this month's issue:

- 🎁 A Special Treat
- 🎁 Island-wide Worship Service
- 🎁 TBS Graduate
- 🎁 "By All Means"
- 🎁 Family Happenings

A SPECIAL TREAT

We met our friends John and Kerrie in our Bislama language class back in 2005, and though they've since moved back to Australia, we still keep in contact now and then. For Christmas, they surprised our team with money to go out and eat.



We found sitters for the kids (and it isn't always easy to find someone "tough" enough to watch our two!) and the five of us enjoyed an evening of great food and adult conversation at a local resort's restaurant. Yum! and Thanks!

From the home-front...

February ushered in one of our hottest months of the year, but for some reason, it's still not unbearable. Maybe we're just used to it now?! Cooking is becoming not so fun with the hotter temperatures. But I shouldn't complain...at least I have an indoor kitchen, an oven, and running water, right?!

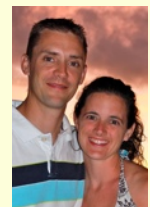
It was my 32nd birthday this month and we had lots of fun celebrating. I had a girl's day out with a few friends, a family outing to a local resort, and a special night of food and my favorite carrot cake with the mission team.

This month saw big changes in the Brandell household. Since we have started a focused effort in training our children in first time obedience (something we've always wanted, but had no idea how to go about getting), our house has changed dramatically. One of the biggest changes in my day is that I try to keep one of the two kids with me at all times. They have become very good helpers with laundry, dishes, and all kinds of things around the house. They are also learning how to play quietly beside me while I do things they aren't quite able to help me with yet. It's made a big difference in how our house looks, sounds, and feels. While things aren't perfect...we're all still learning to be the best God would have us be...things are looking up! We are all happier to say the least. We know our goals (to raise godly children who love, respect, and obey us & God) and are diligently working toward that end. Please pray for us all in this effort.

Hope you are doing well and growing in the Lord.

Love to you all...

Shawnda <><



ISLAND-WIDE WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

In view of the reconciliation of the church in Port Vila that we highlighted last month, the men decided to host an island-wide worship and fellowship to convey that the church in Vila had put those issues behind and was ready to press forward. As you can see from the photos, the auditorium was overflowing (unfortunately, some even had to sit outside!).

Approximately 80 adults and 40 children gathered on February 21, including Christians from Etas, Eton, Epau, Pauanangisu, Marou (Emao), and Duviara (Ambae). Also included in this number were some Christians from Vila who have not been a part of our assembly in quite some time. We pray that this Sunday will serve to spur them on to recommit themselves to Christ.

As is usual for gatherings such as this, the singing was inspiring. Flexon Robbie presented the best sermon I have ever heard him preach, and Steven Felix delivered a heart-felt speech that showed humility and served to challenge everyone to muster a stronger faith. All of the congregations meeting in Vanuatu are relatively small, and it was therefore encouraging for everyone to see so many people “of the same mind and the same judgment” worshipping together in one place.

Following the conclusion of our worship, we shared five large tables full of food. It was a pleasure to see the Christian fellowship in action, and everyone agreed that we should have this sort of gathering more often.



 PATRICK KASSO: TBS GRADUATE

In 2008 our team established the Trutok Baebol Skul in Port Vila in an effort to provide local Christians an opportunity to study the Bible in a classroom setting. It was our desire that we might significantly increase their Bible knowledge that they might put it into practice and teach others also.

The two-year curriculum offered 16 courses, with each course meeting for 12 classroom hours. We had only one student complete all 16 courses, and he did so with an “A” grade in each and every one.

Patrick Kasso is a native of Tanna Island, but has been on Efate working with his dad on a farm for the past 5 years. He and his wife were converted in December 2005 after studying the Bible with Mike. Patrick is a good student, with a strong voice and a servant heart. And though his attendance at every class was almost always challenging (full time farm-hand, walking 30+ minutes to be picked up for class, etc.), he indeed attended every class.

And so, in an effort to honor him with the honor due, we took some time following the aforementioned combined worship service to publicly recognize his diligent efforts. Aaron gave a brief overview of the school, Mike talked about Patrick’s character and accomplishments, and then I presented him with a certificate that recognized his achievement. We also gave him a 5kg bag of rice and a woven mat to show our appreciation for his efforts in a customary way.

Please be praying that Patrick and the many other TBS students (50+) will put their Bible education into practice by living godly lives and teaching the truth in love to others.



 “BY ALL MEANS”

You may recall Rachel being converted back in November, following several studies with Shawnda and Salome (Etas Village). Since then, the three of them have continued to study the Bible together every Thursday morning at Rachel’s home in Teouma (about a 12 minute drive from Vila). The problem is that as of the end of January, Rachel had not attended a worship service in Etas since her conversion, though she had committed to doing so before being baptized (and recommitted each subsequent week). Every Thursday she would genuinely and humbly exhibit sorrow for not attending, and she admittedly faces a number of challenges. Her husband, though generally supportive of her decision, is not a Christian. Too, he lives and works in town during the week, and sometimes isn’t even able to come home on the weekend. This means that Rachel takes care of the house and their 5 children all by herself most of the time. On top of that, she faces a rather daunting road just to attend worship: a difficult 30 minute walk that includes crossing a waist-deep river and maneuvering a steep ascent to the top of (what I would call) a cliff. Doing this with children (especially if it is raining) is no small feat, though this is certainly not unheard of in Vanuatu (several make similar treks regularly for various reasons). So, what’s the answer? That is a question we have struggled with and prayed about for months.

Paul used the phrase “by all means” in 1 Corinthians 9:22 in reference to his willingness to do whatever it took to give someone the best possible scenario for spiritual success. Shawnda and I made a concerted effort to take on this mindset during the month with Rachel. At the beginning of the month, we established a plan with Rachel that we hoped would jumpstart her weekly attendance. The first Sunday of the month we were to pick Rachel up at her house, take her to worship in Etas, and then drop her back at her house. The second Sunday we arranged for her to be picked up for worship, with the understanding that she would



walk home. The third Sunday was the combined worship in Vila, so we planned to pick her up and drop her off for that. I was scheduled to preach in Epau the fourth Sunday of the month, so we decided that I would drop Shawnda and Alexis off at Rachel's house on my way to the village, and they would walk with her to/from worship (I was grateful that Shawnda was willing to give this a go!).

As is often the case in Vanuatu, things didn't go exactly according to plan. Week 1 went well, and Week 2 Rachel ended up getting a ride most of the way home (which is great, except for the fact that it means she still hasn't had to walk the road she will inevitably have to endure many times in the future if she is going to worship regularly in Etas). Week 3 went according to schedule, and Week 4 didn't go at all because of a Pacific-wide tsunami warning due to the earthquake in Chile. It was also somewhat disheartening that of the three times Rachel was to be picked up, she had totally forgotten that we were even coming.

I say all this to give you some insight into some of the challenges we and local Christians face in Vanuatu. We fully understand that Rachel is a new Christian, and is therefore understandably spiritually immature. However, it is difficult to know exactly what we should do in order to encourage her without "enabling" her, as we obviously can't transport her every week, and there is no public transportation available in her remote area. Some might suggest that she just worship by herself at home on days that she is unable to attend, which would be acceptable, but such is really not feasible nor would it be spiritually beneficial for such a young Christian - she needs the fellowship and encouragement the assembly is designed to provide.

We hope that some of our February efforts and Shawnda's continued weekly studies will provide enough encouragement to get Rachel on the right track. Would you commit to praying for her spiritual wellness, and also that we will have the wisdom to handle this and other similar challenges that we face?

FAMILY HAPPENINGS

We all enjoyed cake and presents as we celebrated Shawnda's birthday on the 12th. As you can see from the top photo, Titus was very excited about what he got his Mom.

The big change around our house this month was a rededication to train our children in obedience. We had come to realize that though we had great intentions, our kids were running the household and we were their pawns. Thankfully, Shawnda stumbled across a great website that promoted in detail a Bible-based approach to training your children. We had wanted to do the right thing for so long, but just weren't sure what that right thing was! After a month of this new focus, we can see a significant difference in every member of our family. We haven't reached our goals just yet, but are relieved to know that we are on the right path. We solicit your prayers that we will be the parents God would have us to be.

Another change this month was in regard to our good friend, Fiona, who is a Christian sister in Vila. She has been helping us around the house and with the kids two half-days per week for a few years, but starting in March she is "on leave" as she and her



husband, Flexon, are expecting their first child. We are so excited for them and can't wait to meet the new addition to the family!

We recently updated the kids' websites with photos and a video, so feel free to check that out if you are interested. Titus and Lexi continue to bring so much joy (and work!) to our lives, and we thank God daily for blessing us with them. We are all excited about being the States this summer to be with many of you. We appreciate your continued support, financial or otherwise, and look forward to being able to express our gratitude in person. We will leave you with some family photos from the month...

