

Vincents in Vanuatu



Martyn and Annette Vincent are a couple from New Zealand, volunteering in Vanuatu for 8 months through Global Mission, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ). We report directly to Rev Phil King. Martyn is a financial accountant, Annette is a quantity surveyor with adult teaching experience.

Martyn: I am here for a specific project: to assist and enable the PCV finance team to produce audited accounts from the years ending 31 May 2013 to the 31 May 2017. The project also includes setting up financial procedures and making recommendations on the financial practices within the PCV. I was unaware just how much of a mission this project would be until I had been working on it for some time and got below the surface of the problem. I was a bit frustrated by some delays (illness, getting access to the accounting software package and getting information from the auditors,) and missing records, but that is part of working in Vanuatu and you just have to get used to it if you want to serve here.

Basic accounting practice has not been well implemented here for several years now so there has been a lot of work sorting out of what has actually happened before any clear picture can be drawn of the PCV's current financial position.

There is still quite some way to go on this untangling process. There is more work in this project than I anticipated and may need to extend to next year. We are uncertain of Gods plans for us at this stage, so we may be back next year to continue to work on the project. If not there will be

an opportunity for someone to continue the project: if you are interested contact Rev Phil King at Global Missions. If you are considering working on the project and a long-term commitment doesn't appeal to you, it can be broken down to smaller parts.



We go to the International Christian Church (ICC), mostly expats or visitors attend, and some Ni-Vanuatu, so a very multi-national church with many different denominations. We are getting to know the longer-term members of the church. I have joined the men's fellowship group, we meet weekly on Wednesdays. This is a great encouragement to me as we adjust to life in Vanuatu.

Annette: My role has not been so clearly defined. I have made myself available to assist with the PCV New Office Building project, but this has not progressed at all so far in 2017. There are plans already drawn up for a 4 storey office building, but as the financial position is still uncertain, no clear decision can be made on forward progress. Also there is disagreement on whether this design best suits the needs of the PCV, and that maybe something smaller and simpler may be the way to go.

I have helped to a small extent with Onesua Presbyterian Technical College's (OPTC) application to get a new Electro Technology course accredited with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (VQA), and worked with the technical trainers to begin creating course material. Transport to and from Onesua is making it difficult to work there though. It is right on the opposite side of our island and takes about 50 minutes to get to if you drive straight there (which I have done with Neville Jones a few times when he has also had work to do up there). However if you go on the school's bus, it can take up to 2 hours including picking up and dropping off other travelers, and shopping stops for them to collect supplies from the big supermarket. If I go and stay overnight, it gets pretty lonely staying in one of the Pam Houses (staff accommodation post-Cyclone Pam) on my own.

I have found other work assisting the PCV Health team on the National Oral Health Survey as a recorder for the dentists doing the oral assessments. I enjoy working as part of a team much more than working on my own.

So far I have only been at various locations around Port Vila, but I will be helping on the next mission to go around villages on the north side of Efate and across to some of the small islands not far offshore – looking forward to that. The survey is to provide information to the Vanuatu Government so they can formulate a plan to address the very poor oral health of their people long-term. Volunteer teams of dentists come from NZ and Australia to provide free treatment, but there are so many people who need it that this is only a short-term fix. Western-style food and lack of oral hygiene education are causing widespread decay of teeth and gums. PCV Health is the coordinating agency for the survey as approved by the Ministry of Health, and Dr Barry Stewart (retired Australian dentist pictured here with Annette) is the instigator, through Medical Sailing Ministries. MSM's yacht Chimere is sailing to some of the outer islands to carry out the survey there (that would be so cool to go on one of their missions!), along with a few other organisations.



I also help Gloria Jones whenever I can with the after-school reading and maths class she runs two afternoons a week at Korvan. Gloria has a wonderful way with the children, and has a really good reading room set up, and I just help out from time to time as my other work allows. The children are delightful and so keen, but some are a long way behind where they should be for their age. Large class sizes and insufficient teacher training are contributing factors, as is lack of education among the parents so the children don't get the practice and encouragement they need at home.

Both Martyn and Annette: We struggled with the heat when we arrived in March, but we are much more comfortable now the weather is cooler. We are settling in, and adjusting to life in Vanuatu. We have relaxed a lot about things that bothered us in the first few weeks, like all the rubbish lying around, things not being as clean or well finished as in NZ, things not happening straight away.

We have moments when we are homesick, like when we receive news from close friends and family, and having to say goodbye to our youngest daughter and her boyfriend who came to visit, but generally we are fine. Being here as a couple is good as we can lift each other (we think it would be much harder for a single person), and we are fortunate to have the support of Neville and Gloria Jones who we have an R&R day with now and then, doing something that feels much more "Kiwi" than our every-day. And we have some days when we have to pinch ourselves to make sure we aren't dreaming because it's just so incredibly beautiful in places and so amazing to be living on a tropical island.

The staff at the PCV office are very welcoming and friendly, in fact all the Ni-Vanuatu people we have met are so friendly. We specially want to thank Pastor Allen Nafuki and Elder Meto Nganga for their support and encouragement. We have made our accommodation pretty comfortable, working with our landlord to fix/improve a few things. We are very grateful that God has blessed us and provided all our needs so that we can serve Him here even in a small way. We are privileged to be a part of the wonderful things He is doing in Vanuatu. There is still a lot of need here but there are also many good things happening here.

We rejoice with the members of PCV in the election of Obed Moses Tallis as the new President of Vanuatu, and look forward to the name of Jesus continuing to be glorified in national spheres of influence, and the national motto "Long God Yumi Stanap" (In God We Stand) being upheld in a very literal way.

Alle Tata, lukem yu.