



Vicar to teach English to Ni-Van Presbyterians

Anglican vicar Rev Dawn Daunauda, will find herself saying “nem blong mi Dawn” fairly often from February as she begins a year teaching English at the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu’s Talua Theological Training Institute.

The expression in the local Bislama language means “My name is Dawn”. The friendly introduction will she hopes open doors to a deeper communication. Over the course of the coming year, Dawn will help Ni-Vanuatu students develop their conversational English and bring their written skills to a level where they are able to write examinations in English. Dawn also expects to lead a women’s study group during her stay on the island of Espiritu Santo, and may assist with college chapel services.

While at first glance having an Anglican vicar teach at a Presbyterian theological training institute might seem unusual, both Dawn and the Church’s Global Mission Coordinator, Rev Phil King, say the co-operative mix is ideal.

Dawn has ministered at the Awatere Christian Joint Venture – the Seddon/Awatere Co-operating Church in Marlborough – for some time. The Anglican/Presbyterian parish works closely with other Christian denominations, and she quickly dispels any notion that the cross-denomination nature of her appointment might be challenging.

“To reassure dyed-in-the-wool Presbyterians, I will be teaching only English, not theology!” she laughs.

Dawn has never formally trained as a teacher, however in 1980 she taught at St Andrew’s, an Anglican school in Tonga, and has worked in different parts of the Pacific. After completing her theology training, she took the reins



Rev Dawn Daunauda with Daniel Saul, a Ni-Vanuatu from Santo (in the blue) and two Kiribati church-goers, after taking her last service at the Seddon/Awatere Co-operating Church.

at the Seddon/Awatere Co-operating Church in July 2010, some two years after seasonal workers from Vanuatu and Kiribati began arriving in the area. Their numbers have grown steadily since then, and with it the relationships built through weekly Bible study sessions, Sunday services, music and testimony – although she does wonder wryly whether their attendance at church is as much for the freshly-baked banana cake she whips up before services as for her ministering abilities.

Phil King believes Dawn’s experience with Ni-Vanuatu will add value to her role in Talua. He says, “I first met her several years ago at a meeting I organised for supporters of our partnership with the Church in Vanuatu. Dawn was the vicar in Seddon and came along because of her contact with Ni-Van seasonal workers. This contact has been ongoing...she has had an active interest for a long time.”

He says that while the Talua training centre has had a healthy working relationship with different denominations in the past, this will be the first time an ordained clergy member of the Anglican Church will join the team.

“We are open and flexible to work with whoever has the passion and sense of calling, along with the gifts, skills and abilities to serve in Vanuatu,” he explains.

Spending 2018 in Vanuatu will be a healing time for Dawn, a chance to press the re-set button. Recent years have seen her tackle

personal difficulties as well as minister to far-spread communities rocked by a series of devastating earthquakes.

“My bishop was concerned that I might burn out. He asked me to imagine what I would love to do, and off the top of my head, I mentioned returning to the islands to teach. We explored several options, but as soon as I enquired about Talua, the doors just opened. Presbyterian Church’s Phil King, Steve Maina from the NZ Church Missionary Society (NZCMS), the Anglican Mission Board and others have all come together and provided all the support and finance needed.

“My head is still spinning from the collaborative provision and the wonderful opportunity for useful refreshment.”

Dawn will live in the Presbyterian Church’s house on campus while at Talua. In consultation with the Church, she will also work with a Southland team who will replace the dining room roof at Talua. There are likely to be other building projects on the go. Her NZCMS role will be to explore mission and ministry opportunities in Vanuatu throughout holiday periods.

For now, however, Dawn is mulling over how she will cope with the energy-sapping island heat. At the same time she is looking forward to learning about where and how God is at work in Vanuatu, and to serving God’s people there.

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