



Hamilton couple help Vanuatu Church

It was a perfect storm that led Martyn and Annette Vincent 2323km from their home in Hamilton to Port Vila in Vanuatu.

The couple had a long-standing connection to the Pacific island through a Ni-Vanuatu family who joined Hamilton's Knox Christian Centre six years ago, the same church the Vincents belong to.

"We kept in contact with this family when they returned to Vanuatu, which prompted us to take an interest in the Global Mission of our Church in Vanuatu, led by Rev Phil King," says Martyn, a Knox church elder.

In 2015, the couple decided to have a holiday in Vanuatu and while there, they visited Lenekal College on the island of Tanna, to bring back news of staff and students following the devastating Cyclone Pam.

Not long after returning home, the couple received the news that the company Martyn worked for was closing down and he would be made redundant in August 2016.

It was something of a turning point. "We felt that the Lord was opening a door for us to work with Global Mission," says Annette, Knox's children's ministry co-ordinator and one of its music leaders.

When Pastor Allen Nafuki of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) approached Phil seeking help with the financial area of their operations, Martyn seemed the perfect fit.

The couple moved to Port Vila in March 2017 and plan to be there for six months, although this may extend.

Martyn is currently working with the finance team at PCV, helping to improve their financial systems and producing annual reports for the last four years. Annette, who is a quantity surveyor and has been teaching quantity surveying at Waikato Polytech for several years, has been assisting with proposed building



Martyn and Annette Vincent are enjoying their time in Vanuatu.

projects for PCV and the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU). She is also helping Onesua Technical College to have one of its courses accredited with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority.

The couple, who left their adult children in the Waikato (and London), say they are enjoying their time in Vanuatu.

"The people here are so friendly and it's easy to start a conversation with total strangers," says Martyn. "Vanuatu is a beautiful country with many attractive beaches, walks and abundant natural beauty."

They are also enjoying attending the International Christian Church which is predominantly made up of ex-pats and volunteers from around the globe. "It's a truly multicultural congregation which also includes some Ni-Vans," says Annette. "We find the style of worship similar to Knox and are receiving good scriptural teaching."

In fact, the only hurdles they've encountered include the heat, termite dust and illness in the first two weeks.

"Adjusting to the daily 30 degree temperatures and the low of 23 at night was a challenge," admits Martyn. "We had hoped to be able to visit a Ni-Van church but are planning to do so once the worst of the heat is gone."

They have also been busy making friends, including fellow Global Mission volunteers in Port Vila, Neville and Gloria Jones. "They are also here for the rest of this year and have been giving us wonderful support and encouragement. We've been having fun and have formed a strong friendship," says Martyn.

"Our Ni-Vanuatu landlord and his family have also been wonderfully supportive and PCV staff have been very good about helping us settle in. In fact, they were very concerned about our health as we adjusted to the heat in our first few weeks."

At this stage, it looks like Martyn and Annette will remain in Port Vila until November this year.

"What the future holds is in God's hands," says Annette. "We will consider coming back next year if God and PCV want us to. Martyn's project may well extend, but at this stage is set to finish later this year, and my work may also extend. But there is a lot of work for the Global Mission team here in Vanuatu, including working with schools, adult education and health, so we would be honoured to come back and continue this work."

Editor's note - Interested in joining or working with the Global Mission team in Vanuatu? Contact Rev Phil King, phil@presbyterian.org.nz.

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